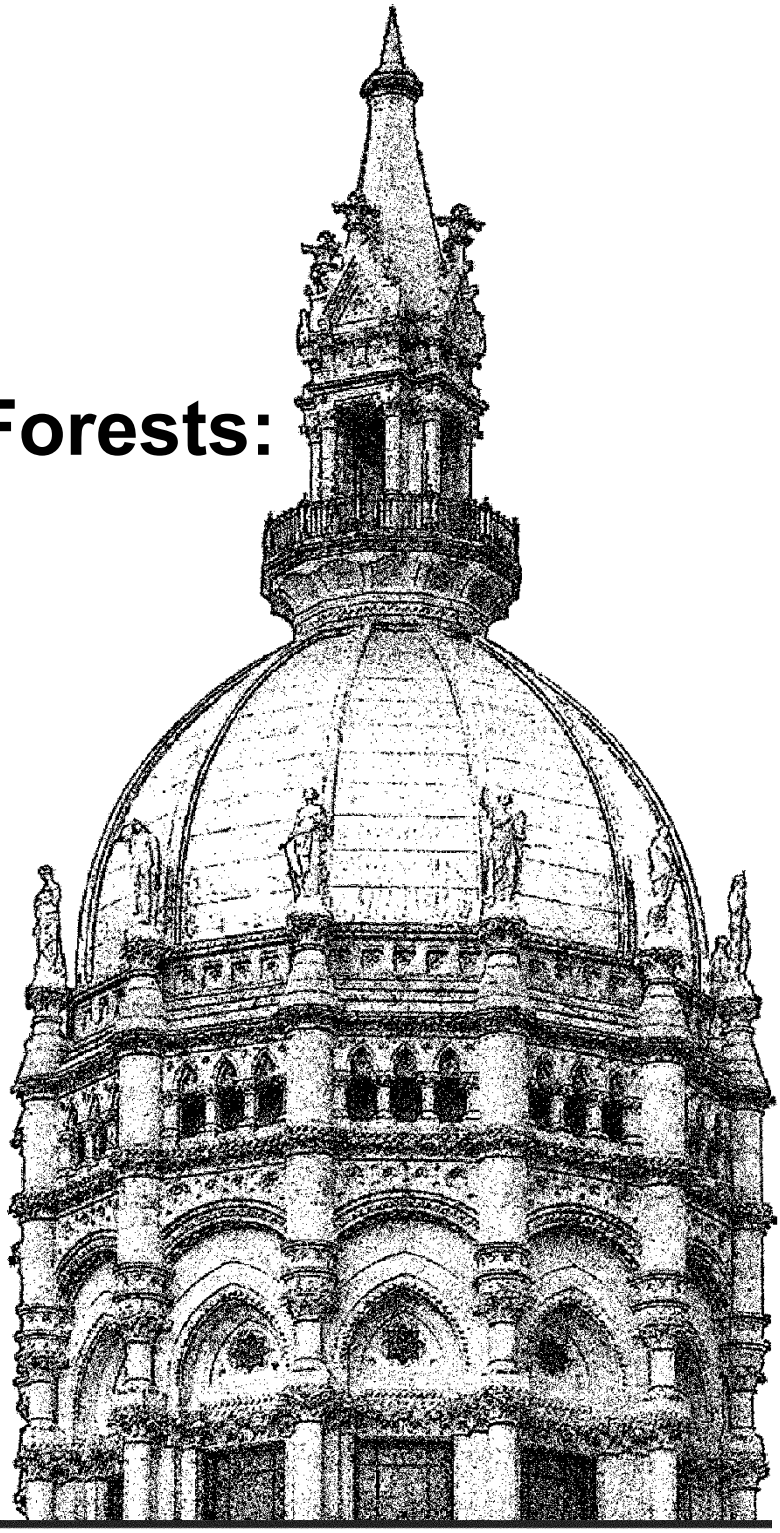
State Parks and Forests: Funding

January 2014



PRI

Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee

Connecticut General Assembly

CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY
LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE

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LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM REVIEW
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State Parks and Forests: Funding

JANUARY 2014

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Background

In June 2013, the program review committee authorized a study of Connecticut's state parks and forests. The study focuses on funding of the state park system, including a comparison of system revenues and expenditures and an assessment of the adequacy of funding to support short- and long-term operational needs.

State parks were first established in Connecticut 100 years ago, under the supervision of the State Park Commission. Now under the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), there are 139 state parks and forests (255,000 acres) providing public outdoor recreation areas in the state. While several bureaus and divisions within DEEP are involved in parks, park operations are handled within the State Parks and Public Outreach Division (Parks Division) by a combination of park supervisors, maintainers, and seasonal employees.

The state park season runs from Memorial Day to Labor Day, though park operations extend beyond these months. During the season, 35 (of 139) parks charge fees for parking, admission, or camping. Fee levels are set by regulation and can vary by location, residency status, and time of day. The last fee change occurred in 2010. Prior to FY 10, a portion of the revenues from collection of park fees was used by the Parks Division through a non-lapsing special fund. Since FY 10, park-generated revenues have gone to the General Fund.

A variety of data collection methods were used to conduct the study, including a review of financial and informational documentation provided by DEEP and interviews with DEEP staff as well as knowledgeable persons and interested parties outside of DEEP. Nationwide state parks comparison data were also reviewed and selected other states were interviewed.

Main Findings

The Parks Division FY 13 budget expenditure level is comparable to the level of FY 06 using constant 2013 dollars**.** Although several funding sources exist, the system has become heavily reliant on the state's General Fund, with little directive or incentive to focus on revenue generating activities.

Connecticut's state park fees are at or above other states in the region. There has been a decrease in paid attendance following fee increases in FY 10. The percentage of use by residents (~80% of day use) was not impacted by the fee increase.

Staffing levels are down and have reached a critical point regarding operations. Several management units do not have permanent, full-time supervisors. Connecticut's use of seasonal workers exceeds the national average.

Planning for the state park system has defaulted to "crisis management" as the level of resources available to parks has decreased. Though there is some collection of data, information is not analyzed and park performance is not measured in meaningful ways to fully inform planning and resource allocation.

Either an increase in funding and staffing or a decrease in services is necessary for continued adequate state park operations in the long-term. It is possible the current service offerings can be maintained with new, lower levels of staffing and funding for a short while longer. However, it is unlikely the current situation can be maintained indefinitely as the current balance relies on deferring maintenance, which may lead to increased future costs.

PRI Recommendations

Recommendations are made throughout the report in support of the key improvement areas mentioned here. In order to enhance planning efforts, **the Parks Division should perform regular reviews of all park resources and annually track park performance through the development of a Results Based Accountability report card**.

Specific recommendations contribute to the recommended reviews and report card, including **requiring measurement of three key areas: attendance, safety, and customer satisfaction**. The major aspects of individual parks to be considered during each park review are: staffing needs; the use and level of fees; and the condition of existing facilities.

A portion of park-generated revenues should be appropriated to the Parks Division, contingent upon demonstration of park performance through the RBA process. The division must develop a plan for use and distribution of this increased funding. Any appropriated park-generated revenue should not supplant existing General Fund monies.

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Acronyms

AIX	National Association of State Park Directors Annual Information Exchange
ATV	All-Terrain Vehicle
BESB	Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind
BOR	Bureau of Outdoor Recreation
CHA	Clough, Harbour & Associates State Parks Infrastructure Conditions Assessment
DCS	Department of Construction Services
DEEP	Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
EC Fund	Environmental Conservation Fund
EnCon	Environmental Conservation Police Division
FTE	Full-time equivalent
OFA	Legislative Office of Fiscal Analysis
PRC	DEEP's Project Review Committee
RBA	Results Based Accountability
RTP	Recreation Trails Program
SCORP	State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

Executive Summary

State Parks and Forests: Funding

In 2013, Connecticut celebrated the hundredth anniversary of its state parks. Under the governance of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), Connecticut's state park system consists of 107 parks and 32 forests covering over 255,000 acres. The purpose of state parks is to provide: outdoor recreation, including hiking, biking, boating, fishing, swimming, picnicking, and camping; protection of natural areas; and educational opportunities and programs.

In June 2013, the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee authorized a study of state parks and forests. Specifically, the study focused on funding for state parks and forests and whether it is adequate to support short- and long-term operational needs. The committee formally adopted the study scope on September 26, 2013.[1]

Within this report, information and analysis are provided of resource trends for state parks, including operational and capital expenditures, revenue, and staffing. To further help determine whether resources are adequate, the study examined three metrics of park use: attendance, safety, and customer satisfaction; additional information and analysis of park system performance measurement and planning are provided. Although this report examines funding for state parks and makes conclusions on resource levels, ultimately, the determination of whether state park funding is adequate is a public policy decision.

Connecticut's state park system provides a wide range of recreational services for residents and non-residents while also protecting the state's natural resources and heritage. The system is a network of land types and involves different programs across several bureaus within the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection for its overall operation. To keep the study scope manageable, and still allow for proper examination of state park system funding, a comprehensive review of the department's State Parks and Public Outreach Division (i.e., Parks Division) was made. The division has primary responsibility within DEEP for the operation of state parks, which is accomplished through central and field-level programs.

Overall, funding for state parks steadily increased during FYs 05-10, but has been on a downward trend since then. The funding level for FY 13, adjusted for inflation, was slightly below the FY 06 level. Connecticut is also more reliant on general fund support than most other states. Conversely, almost all other states have funding mechanisms allowing them to retain either all or a portion of the revenue they generate within their systems of state parks. Connecticut law currently allows some parks to retain revenues from renting facilities in special accounts, but the revenue generated through parking, admission, and camping fees – which is the vast majority of revenue – goes to the state's General Fund.

Staffing levels within the park system are down since FY 08. Decreases in key field personnel, namely park maintainers and supervisors, have occurred generally since FY 09. This

[1] The Connecticut state park system includes parks and forests. The term "parks" is used to refer collectively to parks and forests.

has resulted in some park management areas with maintenance staff levels below what would normally be considered functional and safe, given the types of work performed. In addition, there are not enough field supervisors to fill all current supervisory positions. As a result, the department has required staff to take on additional supervisory responsibilities, resulting in some supervisors working in a "temporary service in a higher class" capacity. In the final analysis, the committee recommends a partial realignment of the funding mechanism for state parks intended to allow the system to regain a portion of the funding decreases over the last several years.

Park-generated revenues have exceeded $6 million annually since CY 11. After a spike in revenues in CY 10 due to an increase in fees (35 percent increase for residents and 50 percent increase for non-residents), both paid attendance and overall revenue have dipped and may be trending downward. Connecticut's fees are at or above regional and national averages for state parks, though fees are only collected at one-quarter of all parks and most fees are also limited to the peak park season between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

Operationally, planning within the park system is primarily "crisis" driven. The system lacks structured attention to performance-based measurement. Important performance data are undergathered and underutilized for analysis purposes. Further, budget cuts and the lack of position refill authority may hamper the division's efforts in these areas. At the same time, additional focus on overall system performance, based on accurate and adequate data, is necessary. The committee recommends a Results Based Accountability (RBA) approach, including development of an RBA report card, as a streamlined way for the division to increase its performance-based analysis.

Taken together, the committee's recommendations presented in this report are intended to provide a solid foundation for achieving a state park system funding mechanism that is better balanced with system needs, and operations and planning efforts that are more performance oriented.

List of Recommendations

1. **DEEP should fully develop and submit the necessary reports required under C.G.S. Sec. 23-15b(c), and ensure each report is available on the department's website for state parks in accordance with the statutory timeframes.**

2. **A portion of the proceeds, as determined by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection on an annual basis, from renting cabins located within state parks or forests should be deposited within a Maintenance, Repair, and Improvement account for the specific park where such cabin(s) is located. The funds should be used to help offset maintenance costs of the cabins. If specific MRI accounts are not yet established for parks with cabins, they should be developed by DEEP.**

3. **The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Parks Division should fully coordinate with Friends groups and other parks associations to ensure in-kind labor and financial resources provided by such groups are taken into consideration for budget and planning purposes.**

4. **The use of season and lifetime passes should be tracked by pass type when parks are otherwise charging for parking or admissions.**

5. **The Parks Division should create a Results Based Accountability-style report card regarding park performance in accordance with the guidelines established by the legislature's Appropriations Committee. The report card should include measures regarding park use (e.g., attendance, safety, and satisfaction), as well as measures of park operations (e.g., planning efforts) and park personnel. The division's first report card should be developed by January 1, 2015, and annually thereafter. The report cards should be provided to the legislative committees of cognizance and made available on the Parks Division website.**

6. **The Parks Division should develop an improved attendance estimation methodology that: 1) spreads responsibility for point-in-time counts; 2) requires the performance of focused counts every five years; 3) uses quantitative numbers already available via revenue collection; and 4) expands the use of car counters.**

7. **The Parks Division should review the use and level of fees for each park location not less than once every five years, as part of an overall park review.**

8. **The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection should use a portion of its bonding authorization for improving parks for purchasing car counters, such that vehicular traffic at all parks can be counted for weeklong or more portions of on- and off-season time periods by 2020, and during each subsequent five-year time period.**

9. **As part of its RBA report card, the Parks Division should develop formal metrics of safety within the state park system, including safety of the general public and division employees. The division should collect and analyze applicable safety-related data necessary to identify trends in the annual number and types of safety-related incidents on a system-wide basis.**

10. **The Parks Division should develop written criteria and procedures for project approval based on the division's system-wide priorities. This should be updated regularly and distributed to park unit supervisors and district managers upon revision. The status and evaluation of merit, based on fit with the established criteria and priorities, of all project applications that move beyond the district level should be communicated, in writing, to the park unit supervisor who first completed the application.**

11. **The Parks Division shall perform a formal review of a portion of the park system locations and resources therein on a rolling basis such that all park system locations are reviewed at least once by 2020. The review shall include an inventory and assessment of the condition of resources and facilities as well as an examination of the staffing needs of each location and shall be updated for each park location at least once throughout every subsequent five-year period.**

12. **The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection should involve field staff (i.e., district managers and unit supervisors) in the budget development and administration process for the Parks Division. Specifically, park unit budgets should be administered**

in coordination with the field staff throughout the fiscal year for non-personal service costs in a manner such that field personnel are aware of yearly budget limitations and allowed to retain some portion, as determined by the department, of any realized savings within the same park unit and/or district.

13. **Between one quarter and one half of revenue generated in state parks shall be appropriated biennially to the Parks Division, with the specific proportion at the request of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and the approval of the Appropriations Committee. This appropriation shall be contingent upon the Parks Division's satisfactory participation in the Results Based Accountability process of the Appropriations Committee, or a similar performance-based measurement requested by the Appropriations Committee. The shared park-generated revenue shall not supplant the General Fund obligation to the Parks Division. The portion of park-generated revenues not appropriated to the Parks Division shall continue to support the General Fund.**

    The Parks Division shall create a plan for use of park-generated revenue that balances the distribution of park revenue-based funds among the park or park units that generated the revenue and the needs of the entire system of parks and present such plan, along with the initial RBA-style report card, to the relevant Appropriations sub-committees, and the Environment Committee. The initial fund distribution plan should emphasize implementation of performance metrics and related data-gathering and analysis.

Introduction

State Parks and Forests: Funding

A system of 107 state parks and 32 state forests covering over 255,000 acres exists in Connecticut. The purpose of state parks and forests is to provide: outdoor recreation, including hiking, biking, boating, fishing, swimming, picnicking, and camping; protection of natural areas; and educational opportunities and programs for the public. The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) is charged with acquiring land for state parks and forests, along with overseeing and managing system operations.

Scope of Study

In June 2013, the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee authorized a study of state parks and forests. Specifically, the study focused on funding for state parks and forest and whether it is adequate to support short- and long-term operational needs. The committee formally adopted the study scope on September 26, 2013.[2]

Research Methods

Committee staff research began with understanding the organizational structure of the state park system, including a review of relevant state laws and policies. Additional research included compiling data on the park system's funding sources and levels, other states' park operations and funding, and performance measures within the division. As a primary information source for this study, committee staff interviewed central and field personnel of the Parks Division, other relevant parks-related program staff within DEEP, and non-governmental stakeholders. Specifically, program review staff met with:

- agency leadership, program managers, and staff within DEEP's Bureau of Outdoor Recreation (BOR), Bureau of Natural Resources, and Bureau of Financial and Support Services;
- a majority of field supervisors, individually or within larger focus groups;
- Connecticut Friends of State Parks, Friends of Gillette Castle State Park, and Connecticut Forest and Park Association; and
- the legislature's Office of Fiscal Analysis.

Committee staff visited the following state parks to gain a better understanding of the services they provide and their operations: Hammonasset Beach State Park; Harkness Memorial State Park; Gillette Castle State Park; Topsmead State Forest; and Penwood State Park. Supervisors at each of the parks were interviewed.

On September 26, 2013, the committee held a public hearing on this topic. Materials from the hearing are available on the committee staff's website.

[2] The Connecticut state park system includes parks and forests. The remainder of this report will use the term "parks" to refer collectively to parks and forests.

Several key data sources were analyzed by committee staff: all Parks Division budget expenditures for FYs 05-13; National Association of State Park Directors-Annual Information Exchange (AIX) statistical reports for FYs 08-12; Connecticut state park revenues and fees; and park system attendance reports. The information from these sources served as the primary data for analysis within this report. Committee staff encountered some challenges in gathering and analyzing accurate park use information for this study, as discussed more fully later in the report. The committee recognizes cuts in operating budgets and staff often impede collection and analysis of relevant park system data, yet accurate and timely data are vital for determining overall performance.

Report Organization

This report contains six chapters outlining committee staff's analysis, findings, and recommendations. Chapter I provides necessary background information about Connecticut's state park system to help provide overall context. Chapter II contains an analysis of the Park Division's expenditures. Chapter III examines park-generated revenue in Connecticut and nationally. A review of park staffing resources is provided in Chapter IV. Chapter V analyzes three key metrics of state park use, performance measurement, and planning. Chapter VI presents operations and funding options and the potential impact of several scenarios on the state park system. The report also contains the following appendices: A) List of State Parks and Forests; B) State Park Fee Summary; C) Other States Information; D) Park Management Unit Expenses; and E) Infrastructure Conditions Assessment Prioritization Criteria.

Agency response. It is the policy of the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee to provide agencies subject to a study with an opportunity to review and comment on committee findings and recommendations prior to publication of the final report. Written response was solicited from the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. The department's response is presented in the final appendix (F).

Chapter I

Background

State parks and forests have been part of Connecticut's heritage for the past century. In 1913, the legislature created a six-member State Park Commission responsible for developing an inventory of land throughout the state. The commission's priority was to understand the land available along Long Island Sound and the state's inland lakes and rivers, given the public's propensity to be near water. In 1921, the commission became known as the State Park and Forest Commission, to reflect its new authority over state forests. In 1971, the commission was merged into the newly-created Department of Environmental Protection, now the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

DEEP is the state agency responsible for managing Connecticut's state park and forest resources. State law specifies the DEEP commissioner is charged with supervising "all lands acquired by the state, as public reservations, for the purposes of public recreation or the preservation of natural beauty or historic association."[3] The DEEP commissioner further has the authority to adopt regulations "for the maintenance of order, safety and sanitation upon the lands under the commissioner's control…."[4] These two statutes refer in large part to the state parks and forests system.

While there are no statutory definitions of parks and forests, in the early years it was explained that state parks were primarily for recreation or conservation of natural scenic beauty, wildlife, and historic interest sites, while state forests were primarily for the provision of timber for economic purposes. Even in 1922, though, it was acknowledged they had many features in common,[5] and the similarities have increased. As such, when used in this report, the term "parks" refers collectively to state parks and forests.

Land Acquisition for State Park System

Connecticut's park system is state-protected open space consisting of a combination of land and water types. A map showing the location of state parks and forests, along with various other state-protected natural areas, is provided in Figure I-1. The map is divided to show the park system's two districts. In addition, the dividing lines within each district are the designations used by DEEP for resource supervision purposes, as described in more detail later in this chapter.

[3] C.G.S. Sec. 23-5
[4] C.G.S. Sec. 23-4
[5] State Park and Forest Commission Report (1922).

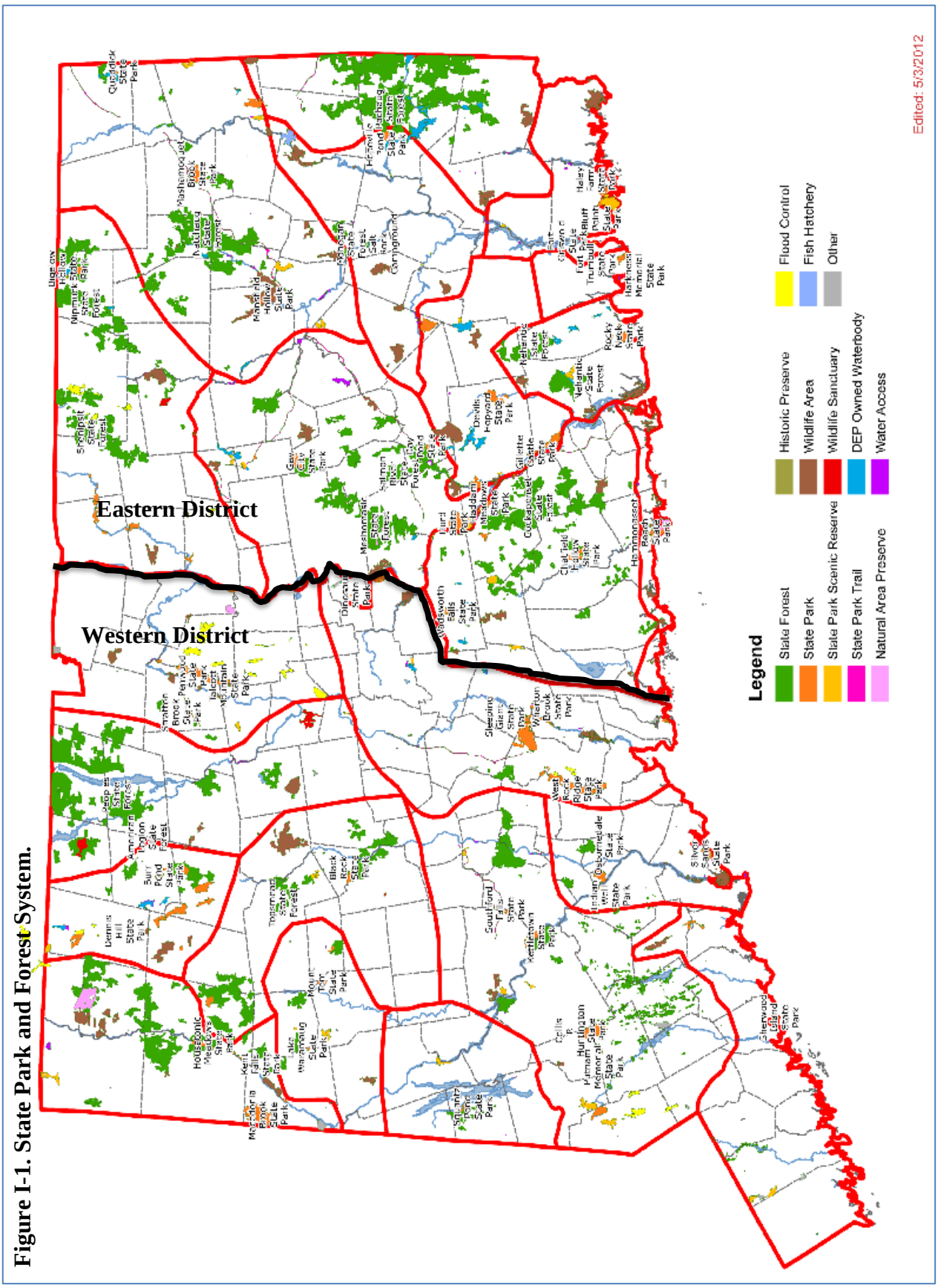


Figure I-1. State Park and Forest System.

The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection administers the Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program to acquire state-owned open space for the state park and forest system.[6] The program is administered to meet the statutory goal of preserving 21 percent of the state's land as open space for recreational and natural resource conservation purposes.[7] The goal, set in 1997, calls for the state to protect 10 percent (320,576 acres) of Connecticut's land, while municipalities and other stakeholders preserve the remaining 11 percent.[8]

According to DEEP, the state has acquired almost 80 percent of its share of the goal, or just over 255,000 acres within its state system of park, forest, wildlife, fishery, and natural resource management areas.[9] The following types of land have been preserved under the state's portion of the Open Space program:

- State Park: 36,630 acres;
- State Forest: 160,243 acres;
- Wildlife Management Area: 31,880 acres;
- Water Access: 6,172 acres;
- Flood Control: 3,821 acres; and
- Other (including easements/restrictions): 16,279 acres.

State Park Inventory

According to DEEP, the mission of the Connecticut state park system is to *provide natural resource-based public recreational opportunities and educational opportunities through a system of state park and forest recreation areas, environmental centers and nature centers which provide an understanding of, access to, and enjoyment of the state's historic, cultural, and natural resources*. The mission is achieved through the 107 state parks and 32 state forests statewide. The park system provides: outdoor recreation, including hiking, biking, boating, fishing, swimming, picnicking, and camping; protection of natural areas; and educational opportunities and programs provided at several state parks. A full listing of state parks and forests, and the activities available within each resource, is provided in Appendix A.

Growth over time. The number of individual state parks has increased over time, as has the size of the overall park system. According to DEEP, there was growth in the designation of state parks through the 1920s, followed by a slowdown during the Depression era (although the Pavilion at Rocky Neck State Park, one of the shoreline's largest structures, was built in the mid-1930s.) The system again saw steady growth over the next several decades, until another period of slowdown in acquisition in the 1970s and 80s, before resuming in late 1990s. In recent years,

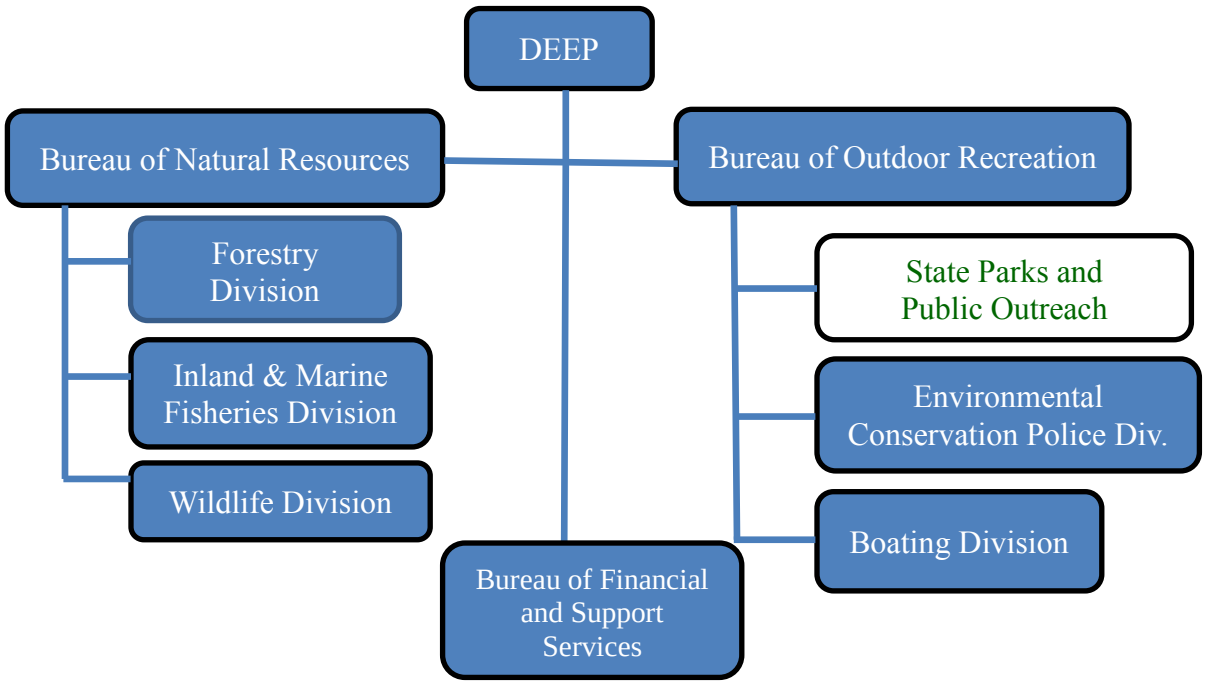
[6] For additional information on state open space, see: Open Space Acquisition, Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee, 1998.
[7] C.G.S. Sec. 23-8(b)
[8] DEEP also manages the Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program. The program offers grants to municipalities, non-profit land conservation organizations, and water companies (i.e., partners of the state) to acquire open space. This acquisition is intended to help meet the statutory goal of 11 percent (352,634 acres) of the state's land under non-state control.
[9] DEEP estimates that nonprofit land conservation organizations, municipalities, and water companies own almost 239,000 acres, or 68 percent of their targeted open space goal

there has not been much open space acquisition; the department is focusing its efforts on maintaining the current open space inventory, including gathering more accurate boundary lines and enforcing encroachment laws.[10] It is important to note that land purchases over time also consist of adding to already existing parcels within the park system, which does not increase the total number of parks but allows for expansion of overall park acreage.

Park System Organization

Figure I-2 shows three bureaus within DEEP have primary responsibility for overseeing the operations of state parks and forests: Bureau of Outdoor Recreation (parks, environmental police, and boating divisions),[11] Bureau of Natural Resources (forestry, fisheries, and wildlife divisions), and Bureau of Financial and Support Services (budget and project management.) Although the bulk of the state park system operations falls under the purview of the BOR's State Parks and Public Outreach Division (Parks Division), several divisions within the natural resources bureau administer programs affecting the state park system, including forestry, fishery, and wildlife programs. This study focuses on the functions within BOR's Parks Division, since the division has operational responsibility for the state park system.

Figure I-2. Department of Energy and Environmental Protection: Bureaus with State Parks and Forests Responsibilities.



[10] The most recent addition of a state park to the system was made in 2008, when the state purchased the 146-acre Sunrise Resort property and designated it a state park.

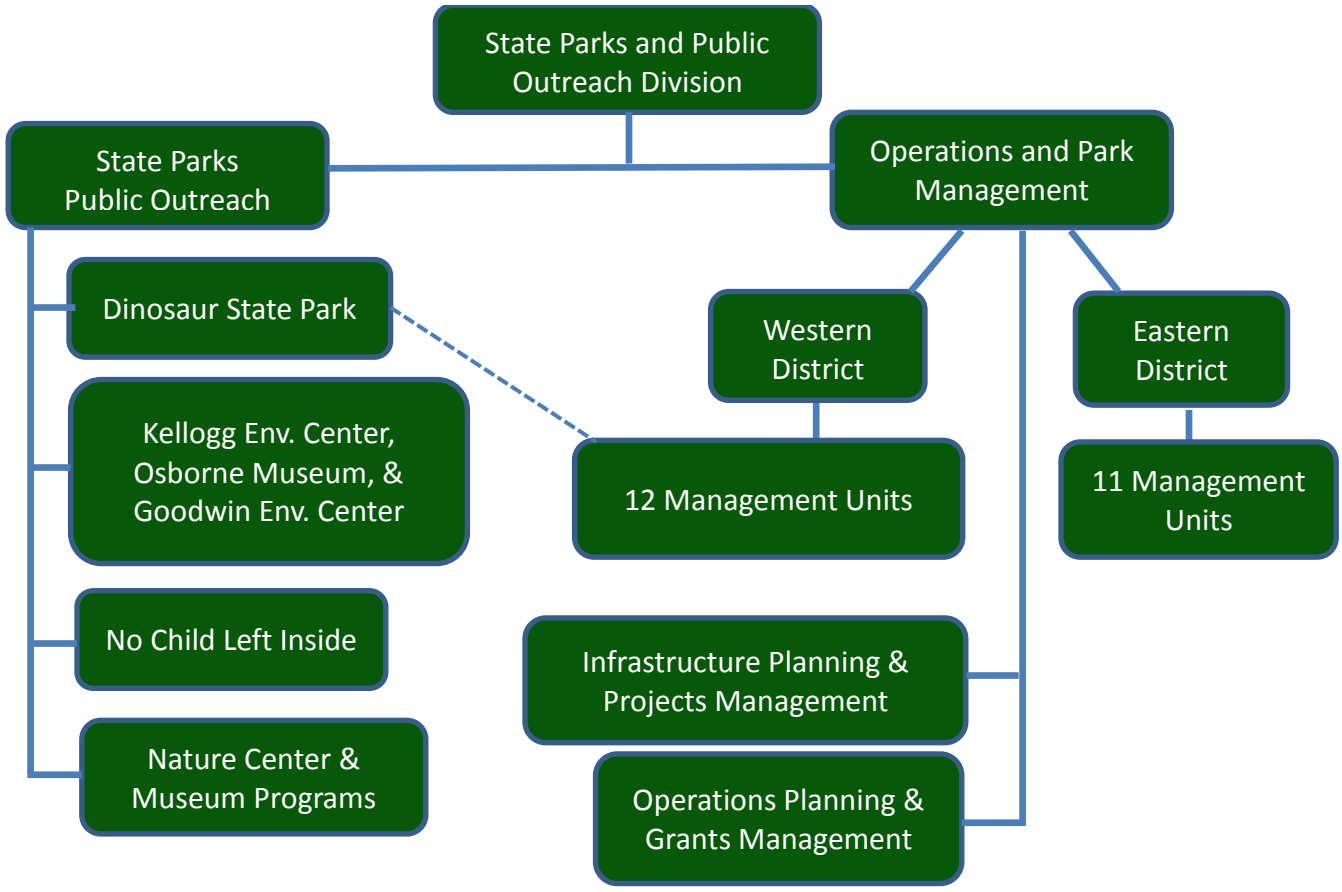
[11] The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation is without a bureau chief; a deputy commissioner serves as the bureau chief in addition to her other responsibilities. The department reports it is in the process of filling the position.

In addition to the Parks Division, two other divisions in BOR have responsibility for the park system. The Environmental Conservation Police Division (i.e., EnCon Police) provides the bulk of the security and public protection services within state parks. Environmental conservation officers are trained municipal police officers appointed by the commissioner to enforce the state's fish and game, boating, recreational vehicle, and state park and forest laws and regulations. The division provides public education and prevention services, and the officers have full police powers on all DEEP-owned lands and within department facilities. The bureau's Boating Division offers a variety of boating-related services, including safety and education programs, boater certification and registration, and oversight for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the 118 state-owned boat launches.

State Parks and Public Outreach Division

Figure I-3 shows the units within the Parks Division, which has primary responsibility for the management and oversight of the state park system. A description of the units within the division and their roles regarding the park system follows.

Figure I-3. State Parks and Public Outreach Division



Operations and Park Management. The bulk of the division's responsibility for the state's park system falls within the Operations and Park Management unit. The unit is overseen by an assistant division director who reports to the division director. For FY 13, a total of 88 employees staffed the division, with most staff located at the field level.

Within the operations section, DEEP has divided the state into two districts: Eastern and Western, each overseen by a district manager. The district managers are responsible for overseeing supervisors located within each district, setting district priorities, and supervising development and maintenance projects. The two district managers report to the assistant division director.

The two districts are further divided into management units, each overseen by a supervisor (see Figure I-1 above). There are 12 units in the Western District and 11 units in the Eastern District. Within each management unit's boundaries is a collection of state parks, forests, boat launches, and wildlife management areas. The management unit supervisor is accountable for the supervision and operations of the parks and forests recreational areas within the unit. The management units provide the daily grounds-keeping, maintenance, and overall cleanliness of such resources. Unit supervisors are classified as a Supervisor 1, 2, or 3, based on their experience levels, with a Supervisor 3 being the most experienced. For FY 13, there were 17 supervisors for the 23 management units (including two supervisors at Hammonasset Beach State Park.)[12]

Besides supervisors, the staff positions within the management units are mostly maintainers. Similar to supervisors, maintainer positions are classified as Maintainer 1, 2, or 3, with a Maintainer 3 being the highest classification. Maintainers perform a variety of duties, including general maintenance of park grounds and buildings, carpentry, painting, road and trail maintenance, and some minor electrical work. Maintainers also help ensure park cleanliness and safety, as well as assist in job planning, daily project oversight, and supervision of seasonal workers. For FY 13, there were 51 full-time maintainers for the 23 management units.

In addition to full-time staff, seasonal workers help perform many functions within the park system mainly during peak visitation months of May-September. Seasonal workers, including maintenance staff, life guards, fee collectors, campground supervisors, interpretive guides, office assistants, and park rangers augment the full-time park staff. Seasonal workers with experience also may work in a supervisory capacity. As discussed in Chapter IV, various rules and requirements are in place regarding seasonal workers. The division annually averages approximately 500 seasonal workers during peak operating months for parks.

Operations Planning and Grants Management. This unit is primarily responsible for coordinating planning functions for recreational trails and greenways, water safety and lifeguards, and alternative use permits within the state park system. The unit also administers several outdoor recreation grants. Key among those grants is the federal Recreational Trails Program (RTP), which provides funds to states to distribute for developing and maintaining recreational trails and trail-related facilities for nonmotorized and motorized recreational uses, as

[12] Dinosaur State Park is considered a management unit. The park supervisor's title is Environmental Education Coordinator, not Environmental Protection Supervisor as in the other units, and is not included in the total of 17 supervisors.

well as competitive grants provided to non-profit agencies and municipalities for trail maintenance and improvements. Five employees staffed the unit during FY 13.

Infrastructure Planning and Project Management. The Infrastructure Planning and Project Management unit is currently not staffed due to recent retirements and no approval to refill the positions. The unit was responsible for planning and oversight of construction projects within the state park system. The unit also served a liaison function between DEEP and the Department of Construction Services (DCS) for major state parks capital projects under the purview of DCS. The liaison and oversight functions are currently performed through DEEP's Agency Support Services Division (Field Support Unit).

State Parks Public Outreach. This unit offers a variety of programs to engage public use of the state park system. The unit helps develop and implement education programs provided at various state parks, including Goodwin State Forest and Conservation Education Center, Osborne Homestead Museum, Dinosaur State Park, Gillette Castle State Park, and Fort Trumbull State Park. A key set of programs administered by the unit is No Child Left Inside, which focuses on connecting children with the natural resources of state parks. For FY 13, there were five full-time employees in this division.

Services

The state park system offers numerous activities and services for visitors. In addition to outdoor recreational activities, specific parks rent their facilities. Such rentals include:

- 21 open air picnic shelters at 17 different parks, which can typically hold between 50-100 people each;
- a 230-acre estate and 42-room mansion at Harkness Memorial State Park for weddings, receptions, seminars, and conferences;
- the Pavilion at Rocky Neck State Park with a capacity of 300 people; and
- 28 rustic cabin rentals within six parks, with intention to build up to 100 cabins in total.

Fees. Although a majority of the activities provided within the state park system are free to the public, one-quarter of the parks and forests (35 of 139) charge fees for parking, admission, or camping. Fee levels are set by regulation and vary by residence status and time and day (i.e., weekend or weekday) of entrance. In many cases, the fees are assessed from April through October, although parks are open year-round. A full listing of the current fees is provided in Appendix B, and fees and revenues are discussed in more detail later in the report.

Attendance. Attendance figures from state parks are collected by the Parks Division. As provided in more detail in Chapter V, attendance data are not wholly reliable, and the division does not collect attendance information from every state park. Moreover, of the parks submitting data, often the figures are based on estimates made by park supervisors. In total, DEEP estimates state park attendance during 2012 of roughly 8 million visitors.

Expenditures and revenue. Although a detailed analysis of expenditures is provided in the next chapter, FY 13 expenditures for the state Parks Division totaled $12.8 million. Of the total expenditures, $11.2 million was from the state General Fund, while the remaining $1.6 million was from other funding sources, including the federal government, private contributions and donations, such as trusts for individual parks, and restricted revenue (i.e., facility rental fees kept by certain parks). In addition, bond funding is available to support parks.

For calendar year 2012, state parks generated $6.7 million in revenue. Revenue sources include parking fees, camping fees, proceeds from park passes, and sales of miscellaneous items (e.g., firewood). A full analysis of revenue generated through the park system is provided in Chapter III.

Chapter II

Park System Expenditures

Funding for state parks depends on various factors. The main cost drivers for ongoing operations of state parks are staffing, what the state classifies as "other expenses," and capital expenses. Funding available to support park operations also comes from various sources, with the state General Fund serving as the primary funding source. Over time, however, several mechanisms have been implemented to fund operations of state parks.

This chapter analyzes budget expenditures of the Parks Division as they relate to state park operations to provide an overall understanding of park system resource trends.

Key Findings

- *In constant 2013 dollars, the Parks Division's operating expenditures for FY 13 were slightly lower than in FY 06.*
- *State parks expenditures steadily increased during FYs 05-10 followed by a three-year decline since then.*
- *On average, 80 percent of the division's expenditures were funded from the state's General Fund for FYs 05-13; it was 87 percent in FY 13; Connecticut also relies more heavily on general fund contributions than most other states.*
- *Seasonal worker expenditures increased for FY 05-12, followed by a slight decrease in FY 13.*
- *There has been an upward trend in capital expenditures for parks-related projects since FY 11, although FY 11 expenditures were the lowest for the period analyzed (FYs 10-13).*
- *In-kind contributions to state parks are substantial, yet the division does not fully recognize and incorporate them it its overall budget planning process.*

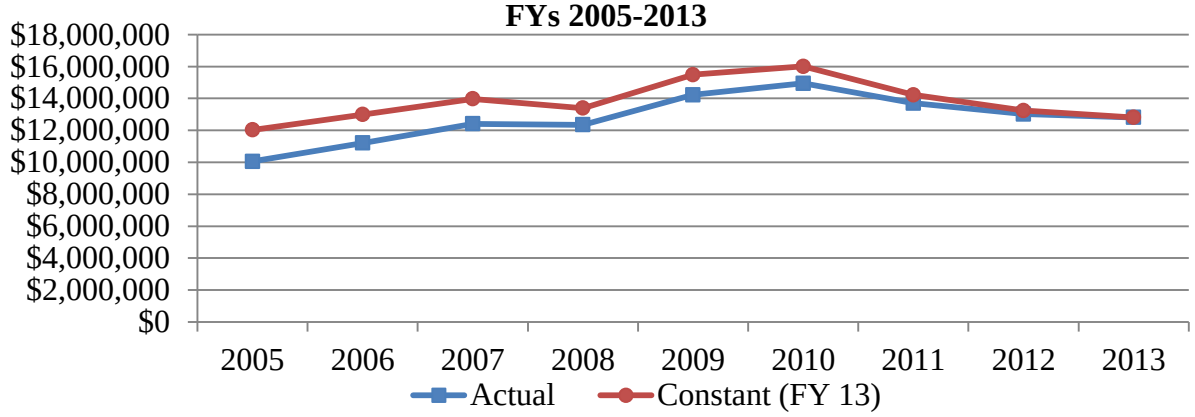
In addition to identifying the functions and services provided in state parks, as summarized in Chapter I, an important step in trying to determine whether funding for parks is adequate is to understand: 1) how the state park system is funded; 2) the current level of resources expended to operate parks; and 3) how present funding compares with previous years. Although several divisions and units within DEEP have some role in the overall system of state parks, the Parks Division provides the bulk of the daily operation of state parks and forests.[13] As such, the expenditure information provided below is for the division.

[13] Other areas within DEEP contributing to the overall parks system include the Bureau of Fiscal and Support Services, the Bureau of Natural Resources, the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation's Boating and Environmental Conservation Police divisions, and the Open Space Acquisition program. Given the BOR and BNR bureaus include multiple programs partially related to the state's park system but also to other services, it is difficult to fully isolate their direct parks-related expenses. The FY 12 budgets for the natural resources and fiscal and support services bureaus totaled $18 million and $27 million respectively. Within BOR, the Boating Division's FY 13 budget was $778,000, and the environmental police division's budget was $4.7 million.

Trends

Using data provided by DEEP,[14] Figure II-1 shows yearly expenditure levels for the Parks Division from all non-capital funding sources for FYs 05-13.[15] The figure provides actual expenditures as well as expenditures adjusted for inflation using FY 13 as the base year. *The overall trend in actual expenditures for state parks steadily increased from FYs 05-10 followed by a relatively sharp three-year decline. The average annual actual expenditure level for state parks for FYs 05-13 was $12.7 million.*

Figure II-1. State Parks Division: Operation Expenditures FYs 2005-2013



Note: Expenditures from the federal Recreational Trails Program only includes the portion attributed to the Parks Division.
Source of data: DEEP

As the figure shows, for FYs 05-10, total actual expenditures steadily increased from $10.1 million to a nine-year high of $14.9 million, for a cumulative increase of 49 percent (there was a relatively small decrease in FY 08). The largest single-year growth period occurred in FY 09, when expenditures rose 15.4 percent from the previous fiscal year. Another noticeable increase occurred in FY 06, when funding increased just over 11 percent from the year before.

The growth in expenditures for state parks over the nine-year period analyzed began to decline in FY 11. During FYs 11-13, the cumulative drop in expenditures was just under $2.1 million, or 14.2 percent. Specifically, in FY11, expenditures fell over eight percent from the previous year, to $13.7 million, followed by a 5 percent drop in FY 12, and a 1.6 percent decline in FY 13, which was the Park Division's lowest level since FY 08 in actual dollars. Overall, the division's expenditures increased 27 percent, from $10.1 million (FY 05) to $12.8 million (FY 13.) For context, the department's total operating budget for FYs 06-12 increased roughly 43 percent, from $130 million to $186 million.[16]

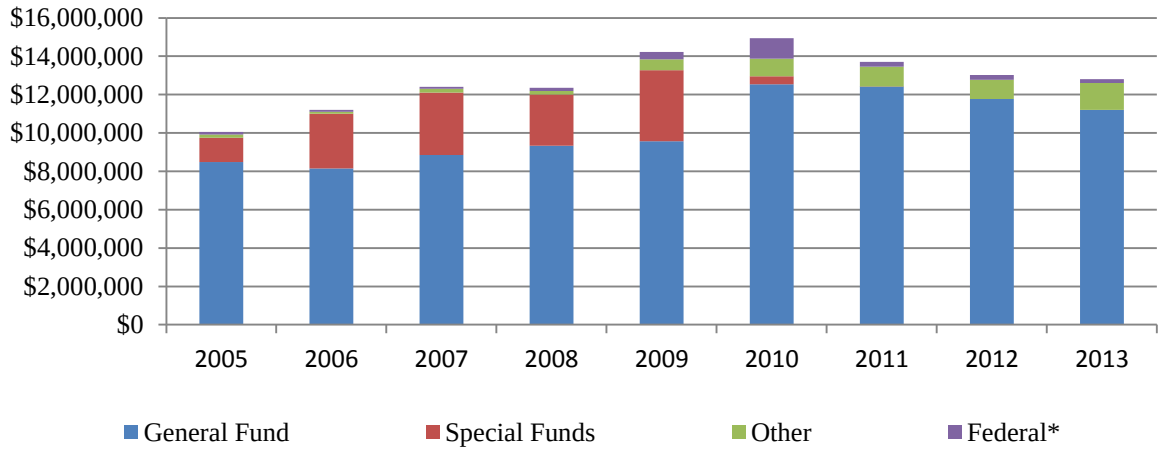
[14] DEEP's expenditure database provided to committee staff included over three million pieces of information for FYs 05-13.
[15] Given the state's conversion to CORE-CT (centralized financial and administrative automated systems) in the early 2000s, DEEP provided expenditure data to PRI staff using FY 05 as the base year, when applicable information was fully automated and available in CORE.
[16] Information derived from Governor's budgets.

Another way of examining funding is to compare expenditure levels adjusted for inflation. This type of analysis does not fully determine whether adequate funding exists from an overall perspective, yet it provides a sharper examination of expenditures in real dollars, or buying power. Using FY 13 as the constant year, when adjusted for inflation, expenditures rose 33 percent overall from FY 05 through FY 10, followed by a 20 percent decline in FYs 11-13. *In constant dollars, Parks Division expenditures for FY 13 ($12.8 million) were slightly lower than in FY 06 ($12.9 million.) Overall, for FYs 05-13, there was a 6.5 percent increase in the division's operations expenditures when adjusted for inflation, compared to an unadjusted increase of 27 percent.*

Funding Sources

Funding for the operation of state parks currently comes from four sources: the state General Fund; the federal government; contributions/donations made to the park system, including private trust funds; and revenue generated by individual state parks that is restricted for use by those parks per state law. The specific funding sources and their expenditure amounts (not adjusted for inflation) since FY 05 are provided in Figure II-2 and described below. The figure does not include capital expenditures, which are examined separately in this chapter, or fringe benefit costs, except in association with special funds given DEEP was responsible for such costs. In addition, actual revenues generated by user fees are discussed in Chapter III.

Figure II-2. State Parks Operations Expenditures by Fund Source FYs 2005-2013



* Expenditures from federal sources considered "pass through to non-state entities" - mainly from the federal Recreational Trails Program - are not included in the figure. Funding for DEEP-incurred expenses under this grant program are included.

Source of data: DEEP

General Fund: Expenses associated with the state General Fund consist of personal services (e.g., full-time and seasonal staff salaries and wages) and other expenses (e.g., maintenance supplies and services, utilities, motor fuel, heating oil). Since FY 05, General Fund expenditures for the Parks Division have ranged between $8.1 million (FY 06) and $12.5 million (FY 10), and averaged $10.2 million a year.

DEEP data show 80 percent of the state's park system expenditures came from the General Fund for FYs 05-13. Beginning in FY 10, this percentage is even higher, when the division's funding mechanism was changed and special funds from park-generated revenue were no longer a source of funding for state parks. The funding lost from special funds was initially replaced with additional General Fund monies. In FY 13, the most recent year examined, the General Fund supported 85 percent of the division's expenditures, up from 67 percent in FY 09, the last year special funds existed.

Special Funds: Special funds within the state budget are earmarked for specific purposes and funded outside the General Fund. The Parks Division received a relatively sizable portion of its funding from special funds prior to FY 10. At that time, due in part to the state's budget crisis, special funds were absorbed within the General Fund and no longer available as a funding source for numerous programs, including state parks. *At the highest point of their use before being eliminated as a funding source for the Parks Division, special funds accounted for 26 percent of the division's overall budget in FYs 07 and 09.*

The Environmental Conservation Fund (EC) was the primary funding source for DEEP's State Park, EnCon police, Boating, Fisheries, Wildlife and Forestry programs. EC funding was derived from a variety of sources, including parking and camping fees collected at state parks, hunting, trapping, and fishing licenses collected mainly through the department's online licensing system, and boat registration fees. A portion of the revenue generated by parks was maintained in an EC non-lapsing account to help offset expenses, while the remaining share went to the General Fund. As such, the Parks Division typically generated more in revenue from park and camping fees than it received from the Environmental Conservation Fund.

The department also maintained a reserve in EC funding from year to year to ensure expenses were covered during years when revenue collection was low. Given the seasonal nature of outdoor recreational activities and the impact events such as natural disasters can have on the public's outdoor recreational habits and DEEP's facilities, it was essential to maintain a robust carry-over balance to be able to finance existing salaries and ongoing expenses when revenue collections fluctuated. Revenue generated by state parks is greatly influenced by weather and annual receipts can dramatically fluctuate due in large part to inclement weather during peak admission periods.

The Parks Division's EC funding totaled $11.4 million for FYs 05-09, or 80 percent of the division's special fund-sourced expenditures for those years. Annual EC funding ranged from $1.1 million in FY 05, to $3 million in FY 09, and averaged almost $2.3 million a year. DEEP noted the Environmental Conservation Fund supported personal services expenses (including fringe benefit costs) for approximately 13 positions in the Parks Division, along with other expenses.

Several special funds in addition to the Environmental Conservation Fund helped support the Parks Division before their elimination. The next largest fund was the Maintenance, Repair, and Improvement (MRI) account. The MRI account was established along the lines of a statewide revolving fund for use by all parks. The fund was sustained through revenue generated from the rental of specific facilities at various parks, including pavilion and wedding event

rentals, and used for specific projects within parks. Overall, the account averaged $400,000 in annual expenses before it was eliminated as a special fund beginning FY 11.

State parks generating revenue through park-specific initiatives, such as sales of firewood and ice, were permitted to retain the revenue in individual park "enterprise" accounts. The money was used to help offset miscellaneous park expenses. During the years the accounts were available, they averaged $53,000 annually. An interesting project arising from the use of enterprise funds was the construction of two cabins at Hammonasset Beach State Park in 2009, which started the department's initiative to build cabins on state land.[17] The cabins have been rented to the public with the original thought that the park's enterprise account would support the upkeep of the cabins. With the loss of the enterprise account, such costs are now part of the park's operating budget. Prior to their elimination, other parks used enterprise accounts for new equipment purchases, to replace/repair current equipment, or to complete minor capital repairs. Having funds available meant a park did not have to request extra funding.

Federal government: The Parks Division received a total of $7.4 million in federal funding for FYs 05-13. In reality, only $2.7 million was for division-related services, with the remainder distributed to municipalities and non-profit organizations mainly via the federal Recreational Trails Program grant program. The program is overseen by the Federal Highway Administration and provides funding to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for nonmotorized and motorized recreational uses.

RTP represented the bulk of federal funding for the Parks Division for FYs 05-13, at $6.3 million. Of this total, $1.5 million (25 percent) was available to the division, mostly to help offset its costs to administer the grant program and for some of its own smaller trails projects. (Note: the federal funding portion of Figure II-2 above, as it relates to RTP, only includes the $2.6 million attributed to the Parks Division and not the remaining amount distributed through the division via grants.)

In addition to RTP, almost $900,000 in federal funding was provided to the division through two federal programs: Land and Water Conservation (grants to states for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities) and Nonpoint Source Implementation grants to help manage nonpoint source pollution caused by rainfall or snowmelt collecting natural and human-made pollutants and depositing them into bodies of water. *In total, federal funding accounted for 2.3 percent of the division's expenditures for FYs 05-13.*

Contributions/donations: Non-government sources provide contributions for state parks with expenses incurred against those contributions. Trust funds established for individual state parks account for a sizable portion of this funding source. For example, since FY 05, three prominent trust funds have contributed over $2 million to fund state parks: the Kellogg Conservation Program ($1.5 million), Topsmead ($469,000) and Harkness Memorial State Park ($381,000). This funding category offers certain parks the ability to augment their state General Fund monies, although the funding from trusts generally comes with restrictions on how it may be spent. *Overall, funding from contributions/donations totaled $3.4 million for FYs 05-13, or 3*

[17] To date, 28 cabins in six parks have been built, with a total of 100 planned.

percent of the division's total funding for that nine-year period, and averaged just over $382,000 a year.

Restricted revenue: As noted above, some state parks generate revenue through fees from renting park facilities and use the revenue in part to help offset expenses associated with facility rentals. After special funds, including the MRI fund, were eliminated, P.A. 10-3, effective April 2010, created a separate *General Fund* Maintenance, Repair, and Improvement account, mirroring the MRI special fund as far as the purpose of the account. The public act transferred $1 million from the EC special fund to the new General Fund MRI account. Subaccounts for 17 specific parks have been established. In essence, the legislation created a separate fund for certain parks to use to help mitigate costs associated with renting their facilities, even though the new fund is within the General Fund. *Restricted revenue accounted for 2 percent of the division's budget for FYs 05-13, or $2.1 million.*

The act allows the subaccounts to also receive funds from other private and public sources, including federal and municipal funds, and does not prevent use of funds from sources outside the MRI account to maintain and improve state park property and buildings. Parks with MRI accounts may use their funds to help offset property maintenance, repair, and improvement expenses, and to build new structures. MRI accounts are non-lapsing and cannot be used by other parks.

MRI funds may not replace state appropriations for general park operations, but may be used for personnel expenses such as park staff overtime related to rentals, repairs, and upkeep incurred with facility rentals. The purposes for which MRI funds may be used are up to individual park managers. *To date, 10 out of 17 parks have incurred expenses against their MRI accounts since accounts were established in FY 11. MRI expenditures for FYs 11-13 totaled $1.1 million, with 85 percent of those expenditures attributed to Harkness Memorial State Park.*

Semi-annual expense reports must be submitted by DEEP to the legislature's Office of Fiscal Analysis (OFA) and made available on the department's website.[18] The reports are intended to serve as a public accounting of how MRI funds are used and help the public to more easily track state park projects and expenses associated with the MRI accounts. However, the reports have not been developed routinely, resulting in only some reports submitted and put online.

Recommendation

1. **DEEP should fully develop and submit the necessary reports required under C.G.S. Sec. 23-15b(c), and ensure each report is available on the department's website for state parks in accordance with the statutory timeframes.**

As noted above, a 2009 initiative by the department was implemented to build and rent 100 cabins in several state parks in celebration of the park system's current 100th anniversary. The initiative is financed through a $3 million bond authorization.

[18] C.G.S. Sec. 23-15b(c).

At first, the revenue generated from a park's enterprise activities, including revenue from the newly-build cabins, was used to help maintain the cabins. Given the enterprise funds no longer exist for individual parks, maintenance costs have been transferred to the General Fund. As a result, each park is now responsible for the upkeep of the cabins through its operating budget, which unit supervisors noted they are already underfunded for current services. PRI believes cabin rentals should be considered in a similar way as rental of other park facilities, such as pavilions, with a portion of the proceeds going to the park's MRI account. The parks should be able to use the account to help offset some of the additional maintenance costs associated with cabins.

Recommendation

2. **A portion of the proceeds, as determined by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection on an annual basis, from renting cabins located within state parks or forests should be deposited within a Maintenance, Repair, and Improvement account for the specific park where such cabin(s) is located. The funds should be used to help offset maintenance costs of the cabins. If specific MRI accounts are not yet established for parks with cabins, they should be developed by DEEP.**

In-kind contributions. Not reflected in any funding information for the state park system are the in-kind contributions made to the system by volunteers. For example, there are 23 various state parks "Friends" groups statewide and several additional parks associations. Combined, these organizations donate labor, including gardening, general maintenance, operating gift shops, and guiding tours, to help maintain the state parks with which they are associated. The groups also make financial donations to specific park programs. For example, the Friends group of Harkness Memorial State Park is contributing $500,000 to help refurbish the park's historic greenhouse. In addition, half the salary of the seasonal interpreter at the Meigs Point Nature Center at Hammonasset Beach State Park is paid for by that park's Friends group.

According to the Friends of Connecticut State Parks, Friends groups statewide total approximately 6,900 members who donate 79,000 hours of volunteer time worth $2.2 million annually.[19] The number of hours of donated labor equates to roughly 38 full-time staff. In short, the Friends groups of Connecticut's park system provide a level of labor and financial resources that the state has come to rely on, intentionally or not. Without these additional resources, and those provided by other park-related associations, the state park system either would have to fund the financial and labor shortfalls in some manner, or do without the in-kind contributions provided to maintain park resources, which is unlikely if maintaining current service levels is expected. Moreover, Friends groups have indicated their efforts and contributions have reached their limit, as has the groups' willingness to have their contributions supplant state funding.

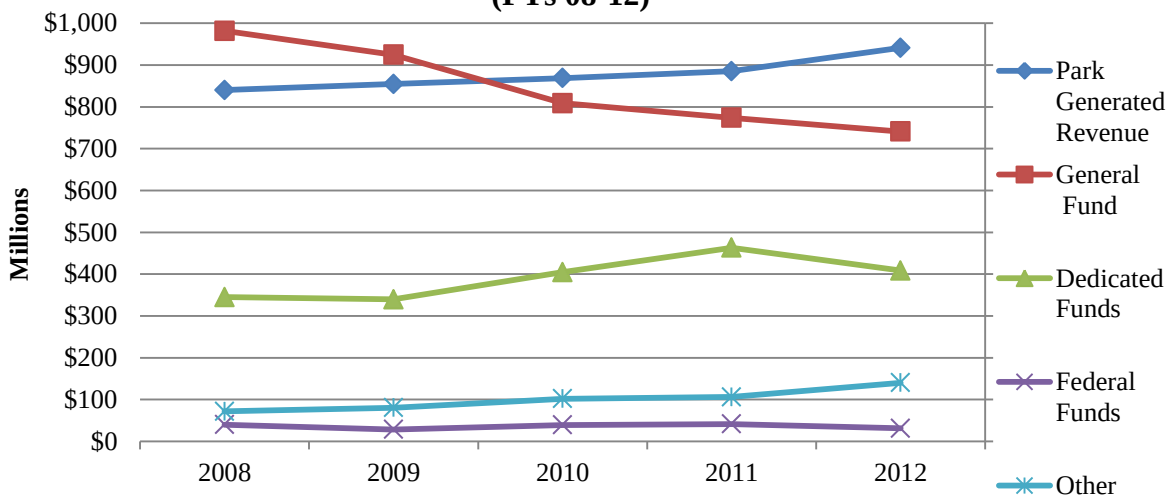
[19] These figures were provided to the committee by Friends of Connecticut State Parks, and have not been independently confirmed by the committee. Further, Connecticut's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan references the in-kind contributions made by Friends groups and provides general numbers.

Recommendation

3. **The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Parks Division should fully coordinate with Friends groups and other parks associations to ensure in-kind labor and financial resources provided by such groups are taken into consideration for budget and planning purposes.**

Comparative national data. Nationwide, state park operations are funded through a combination of park-generated revenues, general funds, and other dedicated funds. There has been a nationwide shift away from reliance on general fund monies for state park operations, as shown in Figure II-3. Collectively, state park operations have become more reliant on park-generated revenues and other dedicated sources. However, *Connecticut relies more heavily on general fund monies than almost all other states, does not use park-generated revenue to fund park operations, and has recently moved toward greater reliance on the General Fund.* Appendix C provides additional information on the use of various funding source types nationally.

Figure II-3. Nationwide State Park Funding Source Amounts (FYs 08-12)

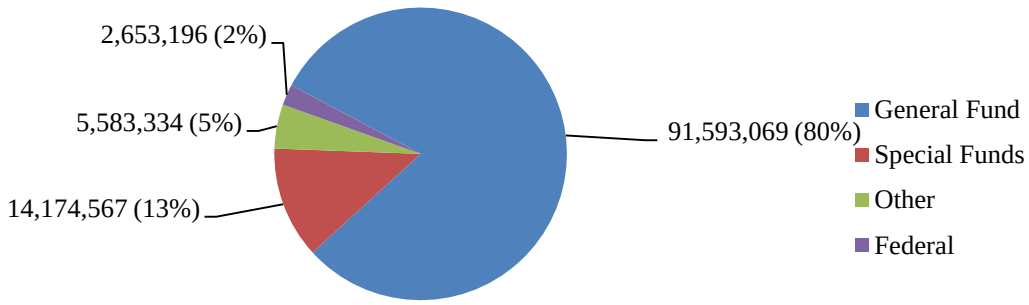


Source of data: AIX

Key State Park Cost Drivers

Each funding source discussed above helps support staffing-related costs and the remaining expenses necessary to operate Connecticut state parks. Figure II-4 provides the breakdown of funding sources used to operate the park system for FYs 05-13. As previously noted, the General Fund supports the bulk of park operations, averaging 80 percent of funding over the nine-year period examined. Special funds, before eliminated as a funding source, accounted for 13 percent, followed by "other" sources (5 percent), and federal funding (2 percent).

Figure II-4. State Parks Division: Connecticut
Total Expenditures by Fund Source: FYs 05-13

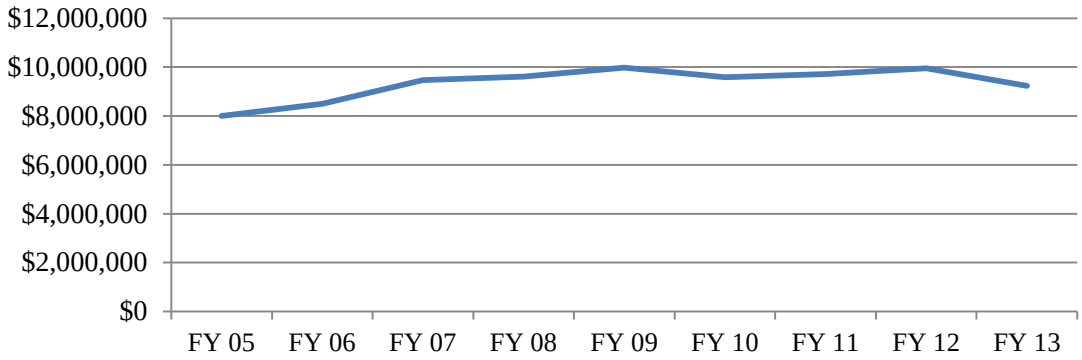


Source of data: DEEP

Personnel. Costs associated with staffing are the largest expense category of the state park system. Such costs mainly include salaries and wages of full-time and part-time staff. Taking into account all funding sources, *personnel expenditures as a percent of total expenses averaged 73 percent for FYs 05-13*. When looking at individual funding sources, the General Fund accounted for 92 percent of all personal services expenditures.

Figure II-5 shows the level of personnel expenditures for FYs 05-13. Overall, such expenditures increased 15 percent for FYs 05-13, from $8 million to $9.2 million, and remained relatively flat since FY 09, with only slight increases and decreases. Specifically, after steady increases beginning in FY 05, personal services expenses decreased four percent in FY 10 ($395,000), followed by a 3.8 percent ($365,000) combined increase in FYs 11-12. Since then, however, there was a seven percent drop in FY 13, from just over $9.9 million to $9.2 million.[20]

Figure II-5 State Parks Division - Personal Services Expenditures: FYs 05-13

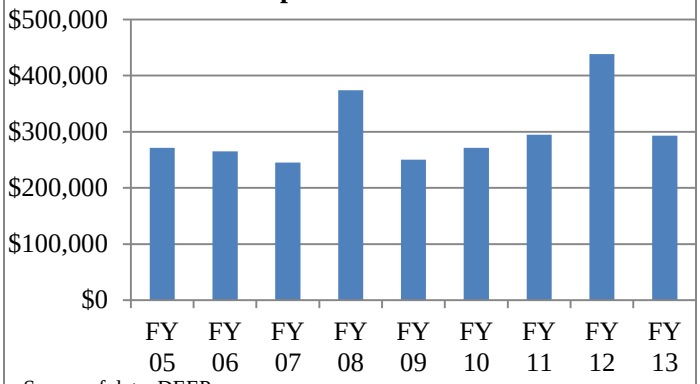


Source of data: DEEP

[20] Additional analysis is needed to more fully determine the reasons for the fluctuations in personnel services expenses, particularly since division's total staffing level steadily decreased since FY 08.

A component of personnel costs is overtime. Overtime expenses were relatively minor in relation to total staffing expenditures, accounting for 3.2 percent of staff expenditures for the period analyzed. As shown in Figure II-6, annual overtime expenditures for the Parks Division averaged just over $300,000. There is no clear overall trend in overtime expenses, although FYs 08 and 12 show high overtime expenditures in relation to the other years. Not including the two outlying years, overtime expenses decreased 10 percent ($26,000) for FYs 05-07 and increase 18 percent ($44,000) for FYs 09-11. The increase since FY 09 could be attributed to a steady decrease in park maintainers and supervisors, as discussed more later in the report. Park staff also noted that overtime has occurred due to clean-up after heavy storms, which could be a plausible explanation for the increase in FY 12. It was during that fiscal year (August 2011) that Hurricane Irene hit the state, dramatically impacting parks during the parks season, namely the shoreline parks.

Figure II-6. State Parks Division Overtime Expenditures: FYs 05-13

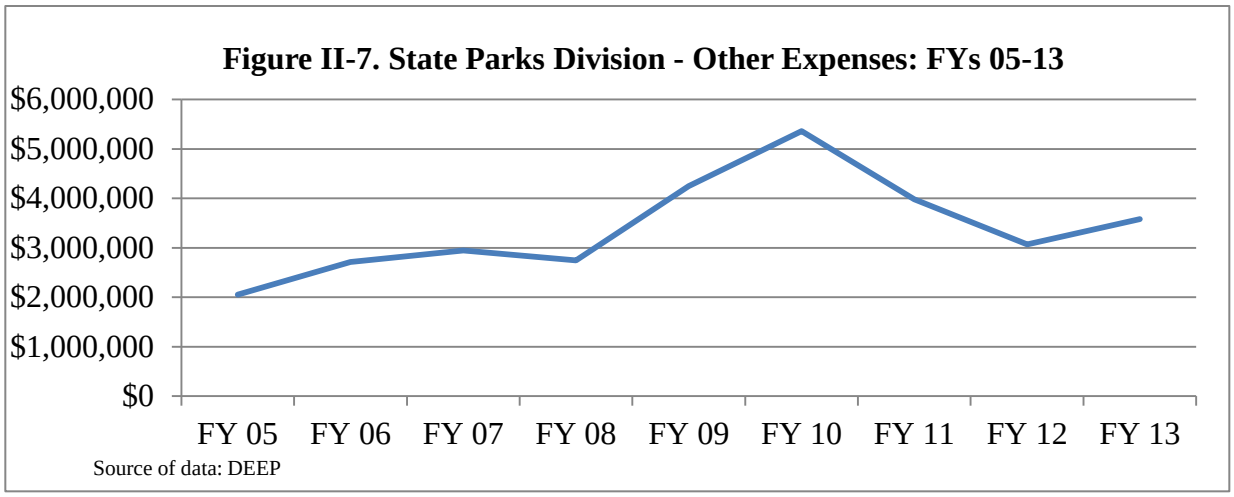


Source of data: DEEP

Other expenses. Beyond personnel services, the other key cost driver within state park operations is "other" expenses (non-capital) necessary for overall sustainability and betterment of state parks. This broad expense category incorporates over 250 types of expenses in CORE-CT. Of those, approximately 150 are associated with park operations, such as utilities, maintenance services, maintenance supplies, and waste removal. Examining these expenses provides a greater understanding of how much money is spent operating state parks and the specific categories in which the expenditures occur.

On average, other expenses accounted for 27 percent of all Park Division non-capital expenses for FYs 05-13. The primary funding source for other expenses during FYs 05-09 was special funds (62 percent), mainly the Environmental Conservation Fund. For FYs 10-13, the General Fund supported 71 percent of other expenses. Over the nine-year period analyzed, the General Fund funded 49 percent of the division's other expenses, special funds (31 percent), restricted revenue (5 percent), contribution/donations (7 percent), and federal funds (8 percent). Again, the reason for the increase in General Fund support beginning in FY 10 was a result of the elimination of special funds as a funding source.

Figure II-7 highlights the trend in other expenses for the Parks Division for FYs 05-13. Overall, expenditures increased 74 percent, from $2.1 million to $3.6 million. Other expenditures almost doubled between FYs 08-10, from $2.7 million to $5.3 million, followed by a 43 percent decline in FYs 11 and 12, to just over $3 million. In FY 13, other expenses increased 17 percent, to $3.6 million.



By funding source. Analysis of DEEP expenditure data shows increases in other expenses under each funding source, specifically for FYs 09-10. For example, in FY 09, special funds increased 54 percent, to $2.3 million, General Fund expenditures rose 14 percent to $1.1 million, and federal funds increased 180 percent, to just under $400,000. Regarding specific types of expenditures that year, there was a marked increase for premises repair and maintenance services (i.e., oil burners, furnaces, sewer lines, sewage pumps, and heating and ventilation systems). In addition, other expenses for the division's Public Outreach function ($345,000) began showing up in CORE-CT that year after it was reorganized into the Parks Division from the department's centralized communications division, which contributed to the overall rise in FY 09.

Other expenses continued to increase in FY 10, up 27 percent from FY 09, which could be a result of deferred maintenance. The largest percentage increases occurred within federal funds and contributions/donations. Federal funding increased almost threefold, to $1 million, mainly due to a one-time inflow of $782,000 to fund expenses associated with government buildings. Other expenses funded through contributions/donations more than tripled, to $537,000, primarily for premises repair/maintenance services. As discussed in more detail below, maintenance-related expenses more than doubled in FY 10, to $2.1 million.[21]

A two-year decline in other expenditures started in FY 11, mainly due to decreases in federal funding (86 percent) and the General Fund (26 percent). As far as specific expenditure cutbacks, two of the more prevalent decreases occurred in premises repair/maintenance supplies (42 percent), and premises repair/maintenance services (84 percent) – among the park system's largest expenditure categories.

Fixed or discretionary expenditures. Other expenses are categorized either as "fixed" or "discretionary." Fixed expenses are recurring expenses an agency or program must account for within its annual budget, including utilities, motor fuel, heating oil/gas, waste/trash removal, and cellular communication services. Discretionary expenses are important to the overall operation of

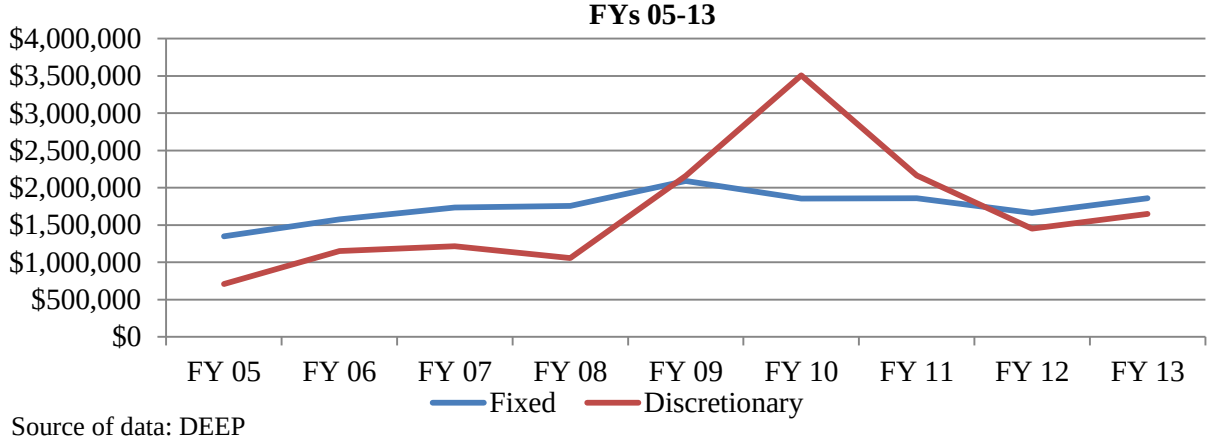
[21] Maintenance-related expenses primarily include maintenance supplies, maintenance services, and motor vehicle repair/maintenance.

a program in any given year, and include maintenance and repair supplies and services, office supplies, motor vehicle maintenance and repairs, and premises cleaning services.

Figure II-8 show the overall trend in fixed and discretionary expenditures for FYs 05-13. Fixed expenditures increased steadily from FYs 05-09, due in large part to increases in utilities (e.g., electricity costs rose 62 percent.) Since then, fixed costs decreased in FYs 10-12, followed by a slight increase in FY 13. For the overall time-period examined, fixed costs rose 38 percent.

Discretionary expenditures increased overall between FYs 05-13. The sharp increase in FY 10 is mostly due to expenditures in repair/maintenance services. In general, committee staff was told there was a large expense as part of the greenhouse restoration project at Harkness Memorial State Park,[22] and there was an initiative in both FY 09 and FY 10 for roof replacement at many facilities. Additional park-specific expenses for maintenance services during FY 10 show Rocky Neck State Park experienced a large increase, from $13,000 to $465,000, due to a major project to replace the Bride Brook culvert, and maintenance services at Hammonasset State Park increased from $37,000 to just under $150,000 for various projects, including an electrical upgrade project and a beach sand restoration project. The increase in expenses for FY 13 is most likely due to repairs beginning after hurricanes Irene (August 2011) and Sandy (October 2012).

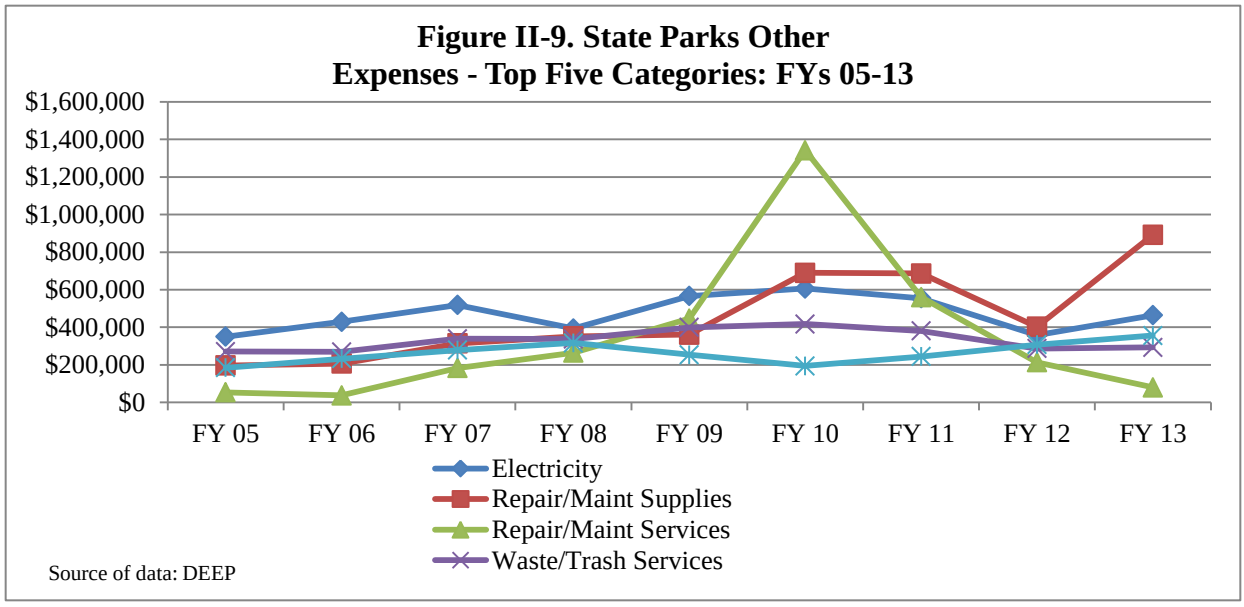
Figure II-8. Park Division Fixed and Discretionary Expenditure Totals FYs 05-13



Source of data: DEEP

Within fixed and discretionary expenses, the five expenditures with the highest total costs for FYs 05-13 were identified, as highlighted in Figure II-9. The categories include, from highest to lowest: 1) electricity (fixed); 2) repair/maintenance supplies (discretionary); 3) repair/ maintenance services (discretionary); 4) waste/trash services (fixed); and 5) motor vehicle fuel/gasoline (fixed). The overall trends within each of the five expenditure categories are mixed, with all but repair/maintenance services having overall upward movement in expenditures from FY 12 to FY 13. Even after expenditures increased in FY 13, most are at or below the nine-year average before inflation.

[22] A joint effort between has been made between DEEP and the Friends of Harkness to refurbish the historic greenhouse complex at Harkness State Park. The Friends group has contributed approximately $500,000, or one-half of the project cost.



A consistent theme among Parks Division field staff is that funding for property maintenance, supplies, and minor repairs has decreased over time. The two expenditure categories accounting for the largest maintenance-related expenses are premises repair and maintenance *supplies*, and premises repair and maintenance *services*. These are broad expense categories covering various types of maintenance-related costs. For example, expenses for maintenance supplies cover items such as nuts and bolts, stone, concrete, lumber, toilet tissue, and other general maintenance and building-related supplies. As noted above, repair/maintenance services include work on oil burners, furnaces, sewer lines, sewage pumps, and heating/ventilation systems. The two expense categories totaled $7.3 million, or just under half of all discretionary expenses for FYs 05-13.

Figure II-9 above shows overall, repair/maintenance services experienced a two-year spike in FYs 09-10. There was a concerted effort on part of the state to address several large maintenance-related projects, including the examples cited above. *In FY 13, however, funding for maintenance services was at its lowest level since FY 06 before accounting for inflation*. Also shown in the figure, the trend in maintenance supplies expenses steadily increased during FYs 05-09, until a relatively sharp jump in FY 10, again most likely due to supplies for specific projects occurring that year. Supplies expenditures decreased again in FY 12, followed by another increase in FY 13 to their highest level since FY 05, at just under $900,000.

Expenditures by Management Unit

Using the DEEP expenditure database provided to committee staff, personnel and other expenses at the management unit level were analyzed. As discussed in Chapter I, the state park system is organized according to 23 management units statewide, with each unit responsible for a collection of state parks. Supervisors oversee the daily operations of the units, including scheduling maintainers, deciding daily project priorities, managing seasonal staff, and tracking capital projects. As such, funding for park operations is based on the management unit structure, and each unit is budgeted funding by the department's central fiscal office.

Table II-1 provides a general overview of the personnel and other expenses by management unit for FY 13. Appendix D shows a broader summary of management unit expenditures for FY 05-13. (A detailed examination of actual expenditures at the management unit level to determine where increases or decreases occurred in any fiscal year is not part of this analysis.) The department is starting to attribute personnel and other expenses to individual parks, and has noted additional work is necessary before it is fully able to determine exact resources dedicated to each park. At the same time, some analysis is currently done at the park level, but strictly for capital expenditures. The committee encourages the department to continue examining expenses at the park level. This information could be an important element for analyzing overall park performance and whether to adjust resources among parks within a management unit or determining resources are no longer necessary within a particular park.

Table II-1. Parks Division Expenditures: FY 13.

Unit*	Personal Services $	% of Unit Total Expenses	Other Expenses $	% of Total Unit Expenses
Burr Pond	204,606	88.2	27,333	11.8
Cockaponsett	346,669	78.1	97,037	21.9
Dinosaur	277,131	80.5	67,137	19.5
Ft. Trumbull	278,956	66.0	143,846	34.0
Gillette Castle	397,185	74.9	133,091	25.1
Hammonasset	941,753	69.0	422,852	31.0
Harkness	528,916	39.8	798,541	60.2
Lake Waramaug	160,667	75.7	51,597	24.3
Macedonia	169,096	58.9	117,790	41.1
Mashamoquet	308,015	77.9	87,235	22.1
Osborndale	359,151	83.0	73,752	17.0
Pauchaug/Hopeville	487,748	74.7	165,032	25.3
Penwood	315,203	81.9	69,857	18.1
Peoples	182,052	77.8	51,974	22.2
Putnam	413,184	81.5	94,096	18.5
Rocky Neck	606,684	78.2	168,963	21.8
Salmon River	264,617	78.4	73,088	21.6
Shenipsit	96,611	70.3	40,735	29.7
Sherwood Island	453,020	72.7	169,788	27.3
Sleeping Giant	336,856	81.5	76,497	18.5
Squantz Pond	221,471	77.0	66,315	23.0
Topsmead	401,073	77.0	120,033	23.0
Director*	608,969	73.8	216,676	26.2
East Distr HQ*	97,727	93.1	7,198	6.9
Kellogg,Osborne,Goodwin*	343,780	74.4	118,002	25.6
Public Outreach*	278,416	95.6	12,797	4.4
West Distr HQ*	152,557	58.9	106,274	41.1
Grand Total	9,232,113	72.1	3,577,536	27.9

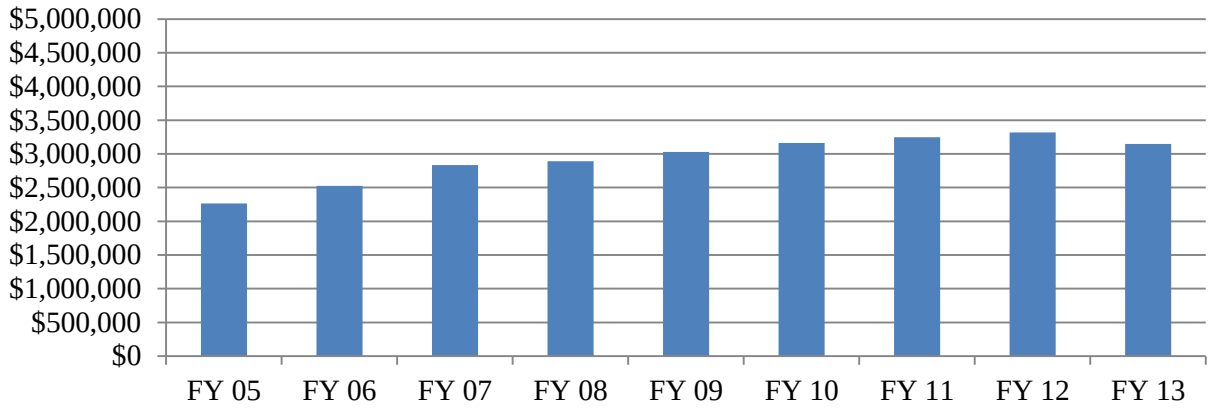
*Budgeted areas within the Parks Division beyond park management units, which were included to show total expenditures for the division.
Source of data: DEEP

Seasonal Employee Expenditures

A key staffing resource used by the parks system is seasonal workers. Budgets for seasonal staff are determined through the department's fiscal services bureau in conjunction with

the Parks Division. Each management unit supervisor then receives a seasonal worker budget. Unlike general budgets, unit supervisors have some flexibility to determine the specific allocations within their seasonal worker budgets (additional discussion about seasonal staffing, including limits on seasonal budgets, is provided later in this report).Figure II-10 shows Parks Division expenditures for seasonal workers for FYs 05-13. For the period analyzed, the division experienced steady annual growth in its seasonal worker expenditures each year except FY 13. Overall, seasonal worker expenditures increased 39 percent for the nine-year period analyzed, from $2.3 million to $3.1 million. Expenditures ranged from a low of $2.2 million in FY 05, to $3.3 million in FY 12. The decline in FY 13 from the previous year was $175,000, or just over 5 percent. On average, the Parks Division expended $2.9 million on seasonal staff since FY 05. In addition, seasonal worker expenditures were highest at the three main shoreline parks (Hammonasset, Rocky Neck, and Sherwood Island.)

Figure II-10. State Park Seasonal Worker Expenditures: FYs 05-13



Source of data: DEEP

Capital Expenditures

In 1997, following years of park closures, the legislature announced that it would bond $114 million to help repair and improve the state park system. Known as the 2010 Plan, the initiative was established to begin rebuilding the infrastructure of Connecticut's parks that was curtailed in earlier years. An outside completion date of 2010 was given to complete the projects.

As a way to help DEEP assess state park capital inventory needs, an independent consultant was hired to conduct a review within 51 of the most used state parks. The 2003 report provided a detailed listing of the capital infrastructure needs within state parks, costs of the recommended improvements, and the staff levels necessary to adequately maintain the system. The study estimated the improvements would cost $187 million over a ten-year time horizon. In addition, the report stated 204 full-time staff and 1,943 seasonal staff would be needed for system-wide operations and maintenance.

To date, roughly half of the $114 million cost of the 2010 Plan has been allocated by the state bond commission for state park infrastructure capital improvements. Given the 2010 completion date has passed, DEEP has rolled the 2010 Plan for state parks into a department-

wide 2020 Plan, which incorporates all of the department's capital improvement plans, not just those associated with state parks.

There are other bond authorizations for park system projects. The department selects capital projects for which to seek funding from the bond commission. Within those authorizations, the department has allocations for different projects. The department has several holding accounts for projects fitting under broader funding categories, including minor capital repairs, health/safety, demolition, or paving. As discussed below, there is a process in place to determine funding levels, and management, of projects based on overall cost. Table II-2 provides a summary of the requirements of the various thresholds (post-bond commission approval.)

Table II-2. Capital Repairs and Improvements Review Process

Project Cost Threshold	Review Process
< $2,500	Considered minor capital repairs. Individual park management units may use their discretionary budgets or a statewide minor capital repair fund for such repairs or improvements. Park supervisors have "P-Cards" (i.e., credit cards) available to make purchases up to varying amounts per transaction based on park units, with a maximum of three transactions per month, for discretionary expenses.
$2,500-$500,000	Must receive approval from DEEP project review committee if the funding is shared between bureaus (typically the case unless a specific bond authorization is made for a particular park project). DEEP has individual bond fund holding accounts for different types of projects (e.g. health and safety, demolition, paving.) Projects using site-specific trust funds are not subject to committee review, but are tracked centrally.
$500,000-$1 million	DEEP must receive approval from the state Department of Construction Services to proceed with managing projects within this dollar threshold. The construction department may decide to manage the project or allow DEEP to manage the project. If DEEP manages the project, the Field Support Unit is the project manager.
> $1 million	DCS is the project manager for all capital projects over $1 million on behalf of DEEP.
Source: PRI	

Minor capital repairs. Management unit supervisors have authority to undertake capital projects or make capital equipment purchases less than $2,500. Funding for such projects/purchases may come for the unit's discretionary budget or through a statewide minor capital repairs/improvement fund maintained for parks by DEEP. The fund is allocated a certain level of money (generally $50,000 in any given period) through bond authorizations for park repairs and improvements. The fund is overseen by the field support unit, which has responsibility for providing support services to the full department, not just parks. Supervisors' projects go through the two district managers, who make the requests for funding. Projects may be completed using individual management unit staff, private contractors, or field support staff, which includes several quality craft workers (e.g., electricians, carpenters, plumbers) available to complete projects. If an individual management unit uses field support staff for projects, the unit is responsible for project material costs, while field support is responsible for the labor costs.

Units were recently given the autonomy to complete their own minor capital repairs outside their discretionary budgets without first receiving approval from the parks central office. The committee believes this process provides units the necessary flexibility to complete projects in a timely manner, yet maintains oversight at the district level.

Project review committee. Projects costing $2,500-$500,000 and using shared funding sources must go through a formal review process within DEEP before approval. The Project Review Committee (PRC) reviews such projects. The committee consists of a blend of department staff, including administrators, program staff, field support staff, and financial services staff. The purpose of the committee is to approve or disapprove projects, decide funding amounts for projects with shared funding sources department-wide, and provide a level of checks and balances on capital expenditures.

At times, capital projects across DEEP bureaus can be classified within the same broad category. For example, the Parks Division, along with other divisions, will request PRC approval for funding based on these broad categories, including minor capital repairs, health/safety repairs, storm damage repair, or demolition. As noted, there are individual holding accounts within DEEP's broader bond authorizations for the various categories. The holding accounts are common funding sources for projects across several bureaus within DEEP. As such, there needs to be a mechanism to formally decide which projects receive funding and how much; the committee serves this purpose.

Within the parks system, unit supervisors and district managers confer about capital projects. Once a project is decided upon, a request form is completed and reviewed in advance of the PRC meeting (held quarterly) by all the relevant bureaus, including financial services and field support. The committee uses the forms as guidance for project scope and cost, and to decide whether to approve, deny, or modify a project. Whenever funds from specific holding accounts are drawn down, a new request from the bond commission is made. The committee does not get involved when bond authorizations are for a project at a specific location, since previous review and justification were completed, namely through the bond commission.

A criticism by some within DEEP of the project review committee process is that various programs, including parks, will request funding for projects without fully analyzing whether the project is the most efficient way to solve a problem given limited resources. Some also question whether enough planning occurs prior to requesting project funding to determine if the project fits into a larger, more strategic plan for capital expenditures or if the project is vital to the overall parks system.

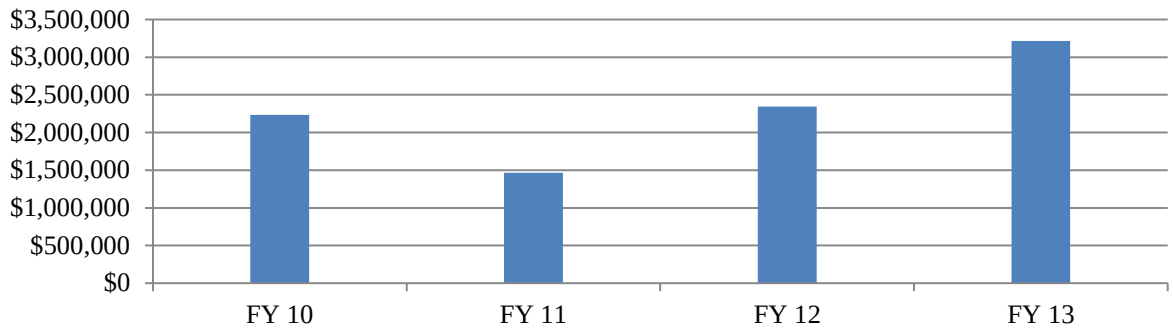
Committee staff attended one PRC meeting. Several projects before the committee were questioned by members regarding their expense and overall purpose within a viable, long-term parks system. One particular project proposed by the Parks Division was discussed as to whether it was necessary, given attendance at the specific park where the project would occur was sparse at best. Although this is only a single event within one PRC meeting, committee staff, through its observations at the meeting combined with information from its broader interviews with department staff, believes it is indicative of a more systemic issue: the lack of proper long-term facilities planning, as discussed in Chapter V.

Major capital projects. The Department of Construction Services has specific teams of architects, engineers, and construction specialists to provide capital project planning and management services for any state construction project over $500,000 (not including the transportation department or University of Connecticut projects.) A DCS project manager will develop an agency's project concept from inception through project delivery, including scope

development, creation of a project budget, formal selection for a design professional, oversight of the design process, recommendation and award of a construction contract, oversight and enforcement of the construction process, and project completion and turnover of the final product to the client agency. The project teams also provide technical assistance and troubleshoot various facility problems when requested from the client agency. For projects over $1 million, DCS takes responsibility for overall project management and delivery, while projects between $500,000 and $1 million may include coordinated efforts between DCS and DEEP staff.

Capital expenditure trends. DEEP provided capital expenditure information for FYs 10-13. Prior to FY 10, capital projects over $1 million did not show up as a DEEP expense on its general ledger. Instead, the expense was considered a DCS expense since that department was responsible for the overall management of such projects. A change was made to ensure expenses for all capital projects – regardless of which department managed the projects – would show up on DEEP's general ledger. To get a truer picture of capital expenses, therefore, only information for FY 10 and after was examined. Figure II-11 shows the results.

Figure II-11. State Parks - Capital Project Expenditures: FYs 10-13



Source of data: DEEP

The *overall trend in expenditures for parks-related capital projects shows an increase since FY 11; expenses that fiscal year were their lowest of the four years examined. Capital expenditures for FY 13 were the highest of all four years.* Annual expenditures for capital parks projects for FYs 10-13 averaged $2.3 million, and ranged from $1.5 million in FY 11, to $3.2 million in FY 13. In addition, the number of capital projects within state parks ranged from 28 (FY 11) to 81 (FY 10). On average, 57 projects occurred annually. Examples of the most expensive projects incurring capital expenses during FYs 10-13 include: Silver Sands Walnut Beach Boardwalk ($909,000); Hammonasset beach stabilization ($478,000); Peoples State Forest new toilet building and other improvements ($406,000); and Harkness paving ($357,000).

Chapter III

Park-Generated Revenue

This chapter discusses various revenue-generation sources within state parks nationally and in Connecticut.

Key Findings

- *Connecticut relies more heavily on day-use fees than do other states.*
- *Connecticut does not provide several common revenue-generating services through its state parks (e.g., golf courses, swimming pools, lodges, or inns).*
- *Three-quarters of park-generated revenues in Connecticut come from six of the 139 parks.*
- *Connecticut's fees are generally at or above other states in the region.*

Nationally, parks generate revenue in a variety of ways, most commonly through user fees. Table III-1 shows the percentage of park-generated revenue from the most common sources for all states and for Connecticut specifically. Nationwide totals show fees for overnight stays (i.e., camping, cabins, lodges, and inns) approach half of total revenues, and day-use fees account for a quarter of all park-generated revenue. A variety of other sources make up roughly one-third of total revenues. Generally, state parks capture revenues through fees for a wide range of activities and services. Twenty-eight states (just over half) report park-generated revenue for five or more of the categories in Table III-1, while Connecticut is one of 22 states getting revenue in four or fewer of the categories.

Table III-1. State Park Revenues by Source (FY 12)

	Total of All States	Connecticut
Entrance Fees	24%	62%
Overnight Stays/Camping	43%	33%
Restaurants	4%	0%
Concessions	7%	2%
Beaches/Pools	1%	0%
Golf Courses	5%	0%
Other	16%	4%

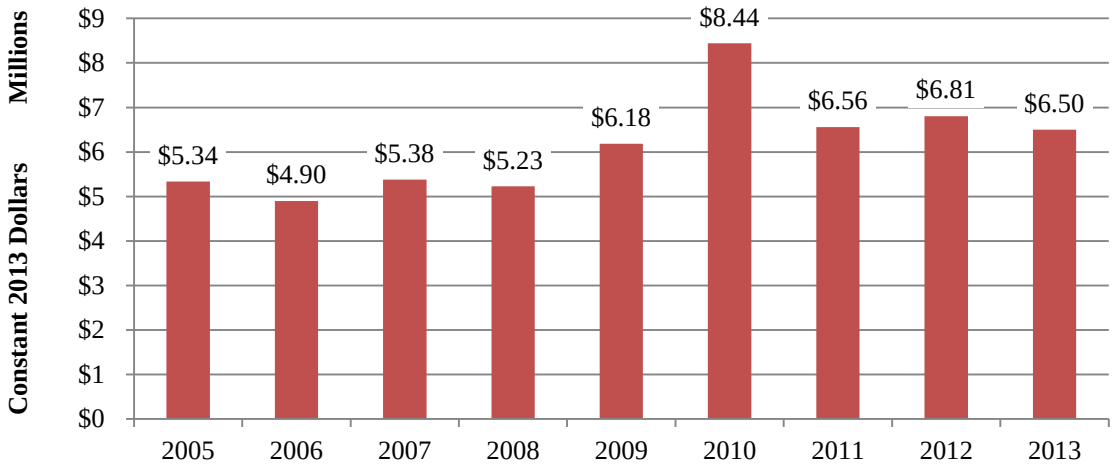
Source of data: AIX

Connecticut's Park-Generated Revenue

Almost two-thirds (62 percent) of Connecticut's park-generated revenue in FY 12 came through day-use fees, with most of the remainder coming from camping and cabin rentals (33 percent). Park-generated revenue in Connecticut ranked at or near the bottom 10 nationally for total revenues and for three of the four types of revenue the state collects (camping, concessions, and other). Connecticut was above average in collection of entrance fees (ranked 16 of 42 states

that collect entrance fees). Figure III-1 shows total park-generated revenues in constant 2013 dollars for CYs 05-13.[23]

Figure III-1. Connecticut State Park Revenues (CYs 05-13)



Source of data: DEEP

In 2013 dollars, total revenues were relatively stable around $5 million annually during CYs 05-08, before increasing past the $6 million annual threshold for CYs 09-13, with the exception of a 38 percent jump from CY 09 to CY 10, which preceded a 20 percent drop from CY 10 to CY 11. While the graph shows something of a plateau for CYs 11-13, there may be a steadier decline from CY 10 to the present once the hurricane-based losses of CY 11 are considered.[24]

Fee increase. Connecticut's state parks fees were changed twice in the last six years. First, the fees were doubled over their FY 09 values effective October 1, 2009, as part of implementation of the state's operating budget that increased all of the fees in the state (not just parks' fees). Fee levels in state parks were subsequently reduced from the doubled rates to current figures (135 percent of FY 09 levels for residents and 150 percent of FY 09 for non-residents) as part of a broader deficit mitigation package in April 2010. Because of the timing of the initial doubling of fees and subsequent reductions, the doubled fee levels were only charged at a handful of parks with ongoing paid activities in October 2009. Table III-2 shows a summary of the timing and amount of the fee increases relative the fee levels in place in FY 09. Also included is one example (weekend fees at Hammonasset) of the actual fee values in each time frame.

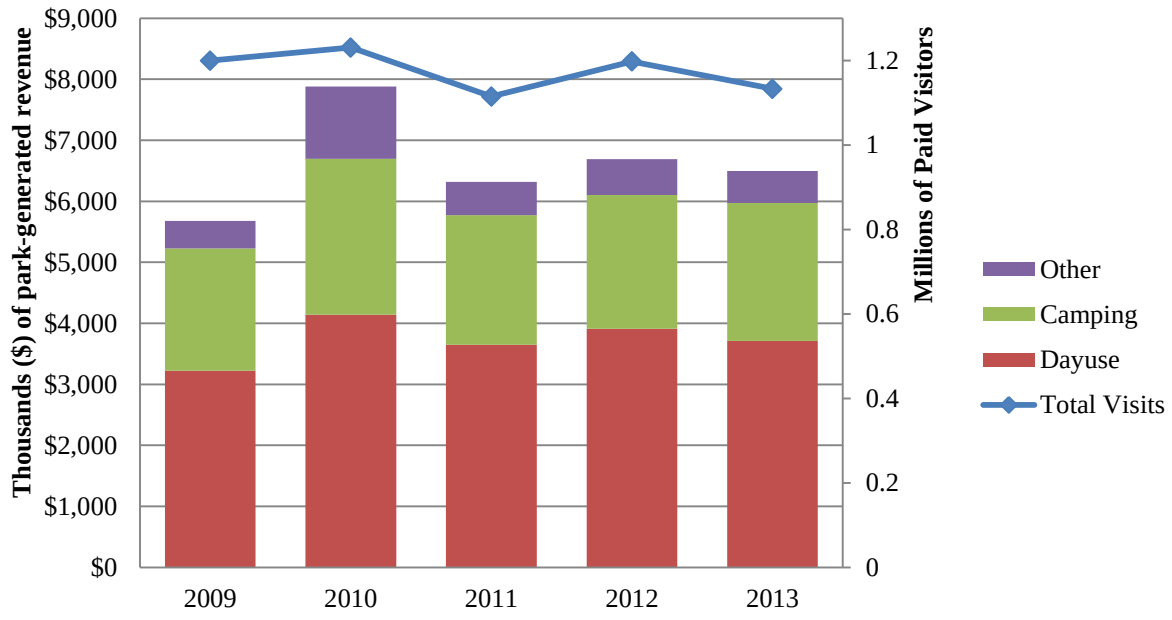
[23] All CY 13 numbers were preliminary through November 2013. Park-generated revenue figures do not include revenues from concessions agreements, which were less than $150,000 in FY 12 and are administered at the Parks Division central office.

[24] Hurricane Irene hit Connecticut in late August 2011, greatly limiting park access for at least two weekends, including the normally busy Labor Day weekend.

Table III-2. Summary of changes to state park fees since 2009				
	% of FY 09 fee level		Example: Hammonasset weekend fee	
Time period	Resident	Non-Resident	Resident	Non-Resident
January 2007 - September 2009	100%	100%	$10	$15
October 2009 - March 2010	200%	200%	$20	$30
April 2010 - present	135%	150%	$13	$22
Source of data: DEEP				

The changes in revenue in CY 10 were likely driven by a significant fee increase in CY 10, as the number of paid visitors (shown as the top line in Figure III-2) remained steady from CY 09 to CY 10. The drop in visitors and revenue in CY 11 seems largely due to the late summer hurricane that made many parks unusable for prime weekends (late August and Labor Day).

Figure III-2. Connecticut State Park Revenues by Activity Type (CYs 09-13)



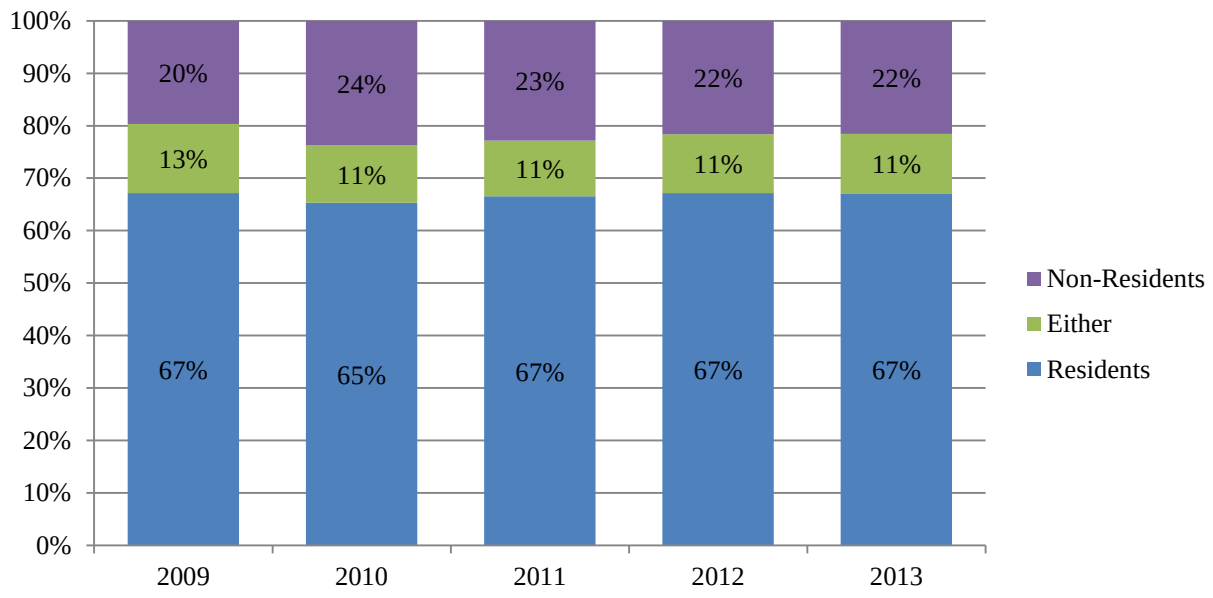
Source of data: DEEP

Without more accurate attendance data for times/days when fees are not collected, it is not possible to fully determine how the changes in fee levels affected park use and visitor behavior. The spike in CY 10 for paid visits and overall revenue seems anomalous as paid attendance returned to near CY 09 levels in CYs 12 and 13. However, overall revenues for CYs 12 and 13 were up only 14 to 18 percent over 2009 levels. This suggests that the 35 percent and 50 percent increase in fee levels produced a temporary boost in revenue, but led to a smaller increase in revenue in the long-term. The revenue per-visit amount grew from approximately $10

per single-day day-use fee in CY 09 to $13 per single-day day-use fee in CY 10 and remained at the higher level in subsequent years, so the drop in revenues since CY 10 appears to be due to a drop in paid attendance.

Revenue generation by residency status. As discussed further in Chapter V, Connecticut residents accounted for over 80 percent of single-day paid day-use visits and 96-97 percent of day-use season passes since CY 09. However, day-use revenues are disproportionately paid by non-residents because many park fees are higher for non-residents. Figure III-3 shows the percentage of day-use revenue (single day and season passes combined) by residency status. Two-thirds of all day-use revenues come from residents, - well below the percentage of visits from residents - 22 percent of day-use revenues came from non-Connecticut residents, and 11 percent came from admissions fees, which, unlike parking fees, do not charge differently based on residency status. *It does not appear the fee changes that went into effect for the 2010 parks season led to a substantial change in the proportion of residents to non-residents using state parks.*

Figure III-3. Percentage of Day-use Revenue by Residency Status (CYs 09-13)



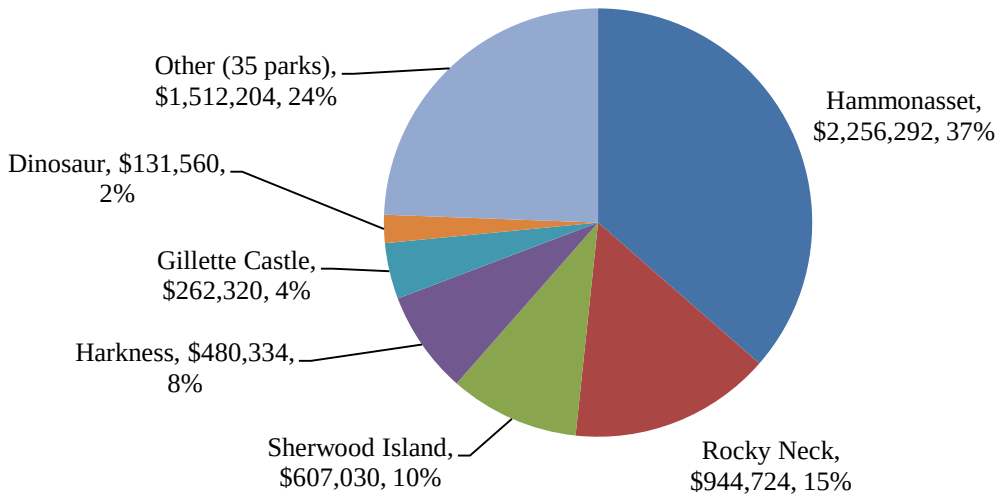
Source of data: DEEP

Revenue-Generating Parks in Connecticut

Parallel to attendance, most revenue generated in parks comes from only six of the 139 parks. Hammonasset, which accounts for roughly one-quarter to one-third of all paid visitors in the state, generates over one-third of all park revenues (37 percent, Figure III-4). The next biggest revenue generators were three of the other shoreline parks. While Rocky Neck and Sherwood Island generate most of the revenue through parking fees, the majority (70 percent) of revenue generated at Harkness comes through rentals of the Harkness mansion for weddings and

other special events. Gillette, the remaining park with over $200,000 annually in revenue generation, regularly generates more than 90 percent of its revenue through admissions to the castle. Dinosaur, admissions-based like Gillette, is at the top of a tier of 13 parks that have generated between $50,000 and $150,000.[25] An additional 17 parks generated between $10,000 and $50,000 each, while 6 parks generated between $300 and $1,600 in CY 13.

Figure III-4. Revenues by Park (CY 13)



Source of data: DEEP

Entrance Fees

Entrance fees (parking or admission) were collected in state parks in 42 states in FY 12. These fees account for nearly a quarter of total state park revenues nationwide. Fee levels vary widely by state, activity/location, and residency status.

Parking fees. Parking fees are the most common entrance fee for all states and for Connecticut. A summary of passenger vehicle fees nationwide is shown in Table III-3.[26] Altogether, 32 states charge fees for passenger vehicle admission or parking, ranging from $0.50 to $30 per car, with most states being near the $5-7 per resident passenger vehicle and $6-10 per non-resident passenger vehicle ranges. Where and how often per vehicle fees are assessed varies, as slightly more than a third of the states that charge for parking at any of their state parks charge at fewer than 25 percent of their parks, another third charge at between 25 and 75 percent of parks, and slightly under a third charge at over 75 percent of parks (including 10 states that charge at all parks).

[25] Dinosaur State Park is the only park that is open year round and should see CY 13 revenues increase when revenue from December is added into the final totals. Similarly, Gillette's revenue and visit totals will increase for CY 13, as the park is open for a select few weekends between Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve.

[26] This table looks only at passenger vehicle entrance/parking. Some states without per vehicle fees charge per person. Many states have separate fees for buses at higher rates.

Table III-3. Summary of Passenger Vehicle Entrance/Parking Fees (FY 12)					
	% of park locations charging for entrance	**Resident Min**	**Resident Max**	**Non-Resident Min**	**Non-Resident Max**
High	100%	$15.00	$30.00	$20.00	$30.00
Median	49%	$5.00	$5.50	$5.00	$6.00
Average	47%	$5.34	$8.71	$6.01	$9.65
Low (non-zero)	1%	$0.50	$3.00	$0.50	$3.00
Connecticut	19%	$6.00	$13.00	$10.00	$22.00
32 states charge passenger vehicle entrance or parking fees. Table does not include 18 states without vehicle fees in analysis. Source of data: AIX.					

Connecticut's parking fees. Connecticut charges parking for part of the year at 26 parks, though there is wide variation in whether and when paid admission is required on weekdays during the park season, while there are no parking fees at any park during the winter.[27] A summary of Connecticut's parking fees is shown in Table III-4. (Appendix B provides summaries of all Connecticut park fees.) The resident vehicle parking rate range is from $6 to $13 while the non-resident range is $10-22. Connecticut charges more per vehicle than the nationwide median, regardless of residency status, but does not charge for parking at most of the parks in the state. *Regionally, Connecticut's parking fees are higher than those in Massachusetts and New York ($2-10 per vehicle), but in line with those in New Jersey and Rhode Island ($5-28 per vehicle).*

Table III-4. Parking Fees in Connecticut			
	Number of parks	**Residents**	**Non-Residents**
Weekend	26	$9-13	$15-22
Weekday	11	$6-9	$10-15
Late-day (after 4 pm)	10	$5-6	$6-7
None	113	-	-
Note: Number of parks for each category is non-exclusive of other categories. The group of parks charging for weekend parking is inclusive of the sub-groups that charge for weekday or late-day admissions. Source of data: DEEP (2013)			

Fewer than half of all states report charging a separate bus or group fee, which ranges from $5 to $150 per bus or group. Connecticut's bus fee is the highest reported at $100 for residents and $150 for non-residents, compared to the median group/bus fee of $20-25.

Individual admission. Twenty-eight states charge individual admission to some state parks, though individual admission is more scarcely used than per vehicle admission. More than half (15) of the 28 states that charge some individual admission are doing so at less than one-third of the parks in those states. The range of admission fees is $1 per adult resident to $36 for adult residents. Only three states have a maximum individual charge greater than $10 per visitor.

Connecticut charges $2 to $6 admission at three sites (Gillette Castle, Dinosaur, and Fort Trumbull State Parks) for specific building entry, but does not charge for parking at those state

[27] Generally, the season is Memorial Day to Labor Day, though some parks begin charging for parking in April and continue until October.

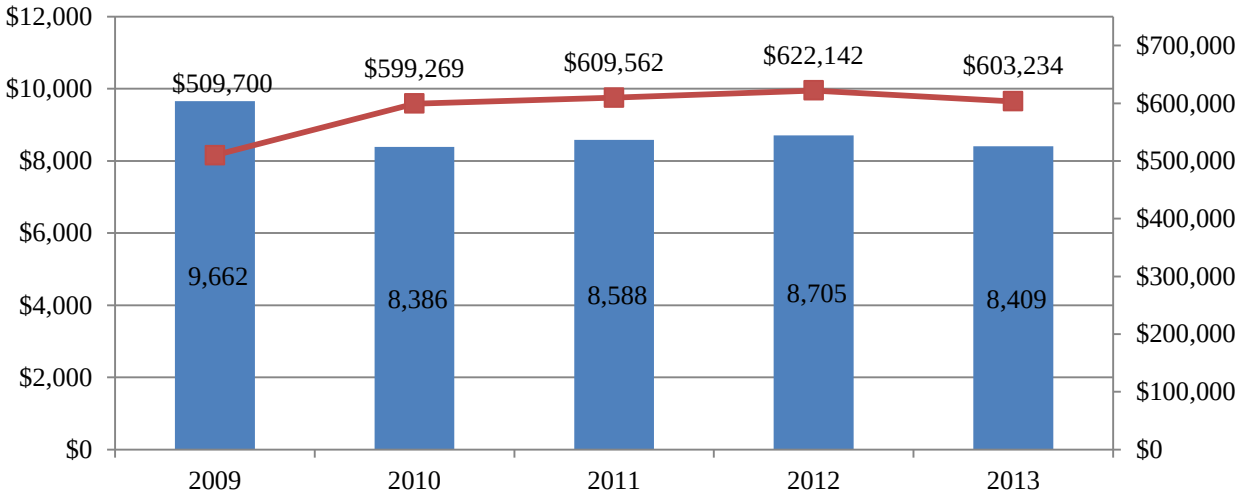
parks. Connecticut also offers the Heritage Season Pass specifically for these three sites, at a cost of $67 per year per family (two adults and up to four children).

Entrance passes. Almost all states that charge parking or admission offer annual passes. The pricing of these passes is such that a park visitor will be better off having bought a pass for unlimited visits than paying per visit in as few as one to two visits to as many as twenty visits. The median number of visits necessary to have equal value between paying for individual visits and paying for a season pass is seven.[28]

Connecticut charges $67 for resident season passes and $112 for non-resident season passes, which provide unlimited parking for one vehicle only. To get a full pass's worth of visits from a season pass, pass-holders would need to enter state parks when fees are being charged for parking at least five to 10 times, depending on days visited (i.e., weekdays or weekends) and the specific parks visited. *Regionally, Connecticut's season pass costs are similar to resident passes in New York ($65 resident), Rhode Island ($60 resident, $120 non-resident), and New Jersey ($50), but higher than Massachusetts ($35-45) and higher than New Jersey's non-resident pass ($75).*

The number of season passes sold (including Heritage Passes) has been between 8,400 and 8,700 since CY 10, a noticeable drop-off from CY 09 when 9,600 passes were sold, as shown in Figure III-5. The price of a season pass increased from $50 for residents and $75 for non-residents in CY 09 to $67 for residents and $112 for non-residents since CY 10. Revenues from season passes increased from $510,000 in CY 09 to $600,000 or more in CYs 10-13, an increase of 17 to 22 percent. Though the number of visits for value remained the same, it is likely the increase in overall price is partially responsible for the decrease in season passes.

Figure III-5. Season Passes per Calendar Year (Number and Revenue) (CYs 09-13)



Source of data: DEEP

[28]Season passes work differently in different states. It is possible some state season passes include non-entrance based benefits, including discounts on camping fees or concessions.

Connecticut also offers two lifetime passes free of charge, the Charter Oak Pass for Connecticut residents 65 and older and another pass for disabled veterans who are Connecticut residents. Parks Division staff estimates that over 100,000 Charter Oak passes have been distributed since the beginning of the program in 1992, with approximately 50,000 Charter Oak passes still active. Between 2,300 and 4,200 Charter Oak Passes have been distributed annually since 2009. There are far fewer disabled veterans passes in circulation, with just over 600 distributed in 2012 and under 200 in 2013.

Connecticut does not track the number of times a season or lifetime pass is used, so, aside from comparisons to other states, it is not currently possible to determine the impact of the passes on park revenue generation. More data on use of these passes would assist in creating better attendance estimates and inform the Parks Division on the relationship between revenues, attendance, and fee levels, in part to determine if the fee levels for passes should be altered.

Recommendation

4. **The use of season and lifetime passes should be tracked by pass type when parks are otherwise charging for parking or admissions.**

This responsibility should be little to no added burden for park staff, especially in parks with electronic registers. In preparing to collect pass use totals, the Parks Division should determine where it is currently possible to track individual pass use and make an effort to track individual pass use for at least the shoreline parks.

Some states offer season passes via non-park venues. For example, in 2011, Michigan instituted a program to make season passes available as part of the car registration process. This approach is different than using a portion of registration fees for park operations, as the program is entirely voluntary and includes several ways to opt out.

If, from the data collected about season passes, the Parks Division determines that selling additional season passes would be beneficial to the parks system or parks visitors, it should explore new ways of marketing and selling season passes, including in collaboration with the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Other Revenue-Generating Services

Overnight stays. Nationwide, 43 percent of park-generated revenues comes from overnight stays compared to 33 percent in Connecticut. All states generate revenue through camping and all but one state have cabins available for rent. Twenty-nine states also have lodges available in state parks as another overnight visit option. Campsite fees range from $2-60 for primitive or non-improved sites to $6-80 for improved sites.[29] The median cost of sites is between $10-30, depending on the amenities. Connecticut appears near the median for non-improved ($14-30) or primitive ($5) sites, and just slightly above average for improved sites ($33-52). Likewise, Connecticut is near the median price for cabin rentals ($70 versus a median minimum of $50).

[29] "Improved sites" typically have one, some, or all of electricity, water, or sewage hookups.

Nationwide, over two-thirds of all overnight stay revenue came from camping ($307 million of $452 million total), with cabins ($86 million) and lodges ($55 million) contributing most of the rest. In Connecticut, almost all of the $2.1 million in overnight state revenue came from campsite rental, with less than $14,000 for cabin rentals in FY 12. The revenue from cabin rentals is likely to increase as more cabins are built around the state, especially from cabins at campsites that are already at or near capacity at peak times.

Concessions. Nationwide, the biggest revenue generator outside of entrance fees and overnight stays is concessions, which accounted for 7 percent ($72 million) of total state park revenues in FY 12. Almost every state reported generating money through concessions (48 states). Concessions include a wide range of goods and services, including food service, camp stores, and recreation rentals (e.g., jet-ski rental, canoe rental). From conversations with state parks personnel in other states, it appears that concessions are perhaps the most commonly privatized parks element, with all case study states reporting a mix of state and private provision of concession services.[30]

For FY 12, Connecticut reported $144,000 in concessions revenue, up from $109,000 in FY 08. Connecticut's concession total ranks 39 of the 48 states generating concessions revenue. Connecticut's percentage of revenue from concessions (2 percent) is less than one-third the national average (7 percent).

Currently, several of the state's busiest parks have concessions controlled by the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB). Through statutory authority,[31] BESB has the right of first refusal for concessions service provision at all state agencies. While other service providers provide either a flat or revenue-based fee to parks for the right to operate in state parks, BESB operators pay no such fee. As BESB has no reporting requirement to parks, the extent of the lost revenues for parks is not evident.

It is possible BESB operations of a limited number of concessions opportunities impacts overall service provision in state parks in indirect ways. For instance, a contractor may be willing to operate on a limited basis in multiple parks, but not willing to operate in lesser-used parks without a highly-attended park as a home base or anchor for the operation. If the Park Division would like to provide more contracted services at a wider range of parks, it might explore requiring the bundling of minimum service provision levels across multiple parks in future requests-for-proposals.

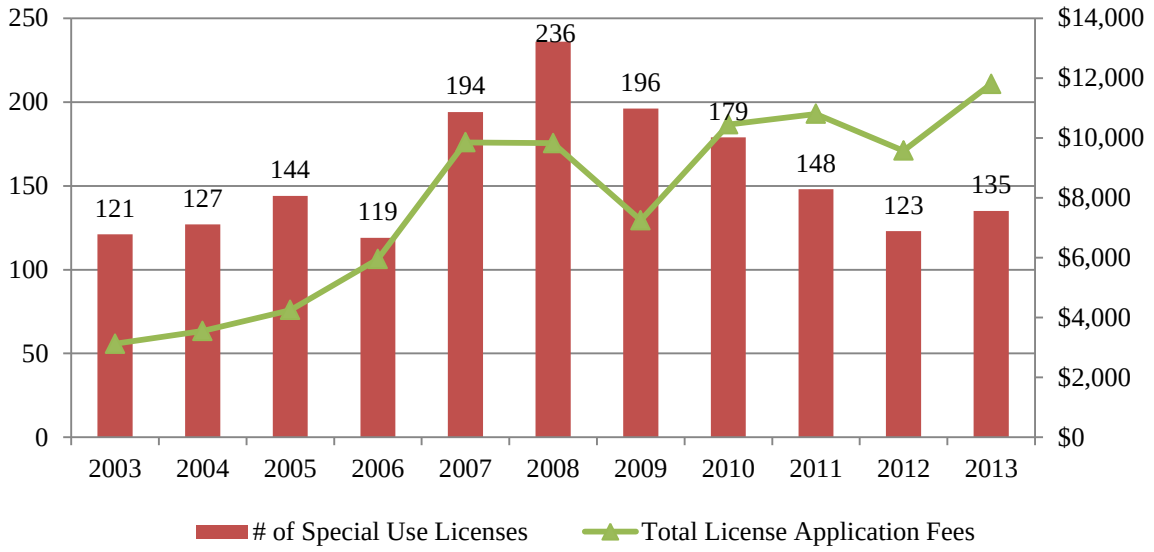
Other fees. Nationwide, some state parks generate revenue through restaurants (19 states), golf courses (17 states), and swimming pools (23 states). Combined, these three types of activities account for 10 percent of nationwide state park revenues, with another 16 percent of nationwide revenues labeled under a broader "other" category. Connecticut does not provide any of the three services and collects no revenue in this area, aside from the revenue derived from parking and camping at swimming areas (i.e., beaches, lakes, and ponds). If the Parks Division seeks to generate additional revenue, it should explore the viability of providing these resource- and location-based services, either internally by the division or through contracts with private

[30] Committee staff interviewed state parks personnel in select other states, as discussed in Appendix E.
[31] C.G.S. Sec. 10-298b.

vendors. Possibilities for increased revenue generation are discussed in greater detail in Chapter VI.

Special use licenses. In some instances, Connecticut grants special use licenses to organizations for events at state parks that would otherwise be outside the rules or guidelines of parks. These events are often meetings or fundraisers for private organizations or governmental groups. Generally, groups are charged a fee to apply for a special permit ($50 for non-profits, $625 for for-profits) and then are responsible for fully covering the other staff and resource costs necessary to hold the events. Over the last 5 years, there has been a declining number of special use licenses issued annually, with the application fees totaling approximately $10,000 or less annually during this timeframe. Estimates of the number of special use licenses issued and the application fees are provided in Figure III-6. A new tracking system for special use licenses was enacted in CY 09. The figures for CYs 03-09 represent the educated guesses of Parks Division staff.

Figure III-6. Special Use Licenses (CYs 03-13)



Source of data: DEEP
Note: Numbers are DEEP estimates. Missing data is possible, especially for CYs 03-08.

The state recoups the actual expenses incurred by the event (e.g., staff overtime), but does not gain revenue from special permits beyond the application fee. There is some concern among park personnel and Friends groups that the general wear and tear from the special events, especially those with large numbers of people in attendance, is not accounted for within the cost reimbursement. The Parks Division does not use special permits as a significant revenue source, but it may be worthwhile for the division to determine whether long-term costs of maintenance should be considered as part of special use license cost reimbursements.

Donations and sponsorships. Both donations and sponsorships are funding sources with the potential to enhance parks and the underlying revenues. Donations may come in the form of cash, equipment, or in-kind service provision, as can sponsorship arrangements. Through

interviews with parks personnel in other states, staff determined there was general agreement that these funding sources can be helpful in broadening or enhancing parks and programs, but are not necessarily reliable ongoing funding sources.

There are varying thoughts among park directors in other states on the proper use and allowance of donations and, more particularly, of sponsorships. Some states support limiting sponsorship arrangements to organizations with preservation or outdoor recreation goals similar to those of a state's park system. Other states can be more lenient about sharing goals, so long as the efforts of the sponsoring company are not at cross purposes to the goals of parks. But because of other factors unique to each state, there is little evident agreement on what constitutes goal conflict. For instance, it would likely be more difficult to limit sponsorships in states that otherwise lease park land for energy production purposes.

As mentioned in Chapter II, state parks in Connecticut are assisted by arrangements with and donations from non-profit parks assistance groups. The state also allows sponsorships in particular instances. Most notably, some of the programs put on by the Parks Division are implemented to some degree with sponsors. These sponsors generally provide equipment or personnel for particular programs. Additionally, there is now a Connecticut state parks app for mobile devices that was created at no cost to the state through a sponsorship agreement with the app designers. Generally, Connecticut is deliberate in pursuit and use of sponsorships arrangements. It may be possible for the state to find additional ways for sponsorships to be helpful for state parks' programs, but it is likely program offerings would need to be expanded to realize greater funding in this area.

Chapter IV

Staffing

As discussed in Chapter II, the bulk of expenditures for state parks are for personnel costs. Full-time staff within the Parks Division either are field staff (maintainers, supervisors, and district managers) within the 23 park units divided across two districts statewide, or central office staff (division director and assistant director, analysts, and public outreach staff).

Key Findings

- *Between FYs 06-13, staffing levels reached a high of 110 in FY 08. In FY 13, staffing was down 19 percent, to 88 staff, the lowest level in the past eight fiscal years.*
- *Staffing levels for key park operations staff - park maintainers and supervisors – are at or near their lowest levels since FY 06.*
- *There is an inadequate number of supervisors at appropriate levels to fill the needs of the current 23 management units - several management units do not have full-time supervisors, are supervised with supervisors or maintainers temporarily serving in a higher class, or are overseen by supervisors from other units.*

Daily operations within state parks are performed by the following types of staff:

- Maintainer - responsible for overall operations of state parks. Major responsibilities include: landscaping; skilled labor (carpentry, masonry, roofing, minor electrical repairs); painting; road and trail maintenance; general maintenance on buildings, dams, and other DEEP-owned facilities; hand and power tool use and repair (mowing equipment, tractors, trucks, chainsaws, and firefighting equipment); and supervising seasonal staff.

- Supervisor - schedules, assigns, oversees, and reviews staff work; provides staff training and assistance; conducts performance evaluations; plans and prioritizes daily work of unit staff; acts as liaison with other units, central office, and other agencies; establishes and maintains unit procedures; manages unit business activities, including purchase requisitions, inventories, revenue deposits, and time and attendance reports; participates in fire suppression crews and boundary maintenance; interacts with park visitors and Friends groups; prioritizes, assigns, and supervises maintenance projects; and hires and trains seasonal staff.

- Operations supervisor (i.e., district manager) – provides many of the same duties and responsibilities of unit supervisors, but on a district-wide basis, schedules, assigns, oversees, and reviews work of staff within district; coordinates and provides staff training and assistance; conducts performance

evaluations of unit supervisors; determines and plans area work; analyzes maintenance operations and programs; oversees special area programs; may assist in preparation of land acquisition, use, and development plans; and coordinates with central office regarding district staff and projects.

- Seasonal staff - includes maintenance staff, life guards, park rangers, campground supervisors, and ticket booth attendees. Seasonal staff assist permanent staff in most park operations, including projects and ongoing maintenance.

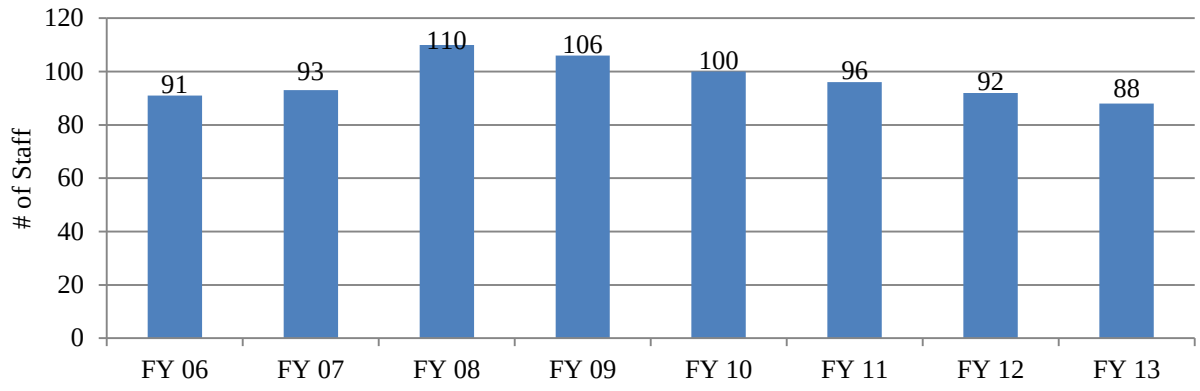
In addition to field staff, centralized staff provides several functions. This includes overall coordination with field staff, implementing federal grant programs, such as the Recreational Trails Program, ensuring proper hiring, scheduling, and certification of lifeguards, and performing public outreach activities, including the No Child Left Inside initiative.

Staffing levels within the Parks Division have fluctuated over time, as have certain requirements associated with parks personnel. In addition, there is a relatively large number of staff eligible to retire and, if authority is not given to refill those positions, the operations within state parks will need to be adjusted accordingly.

Overall Staffing Levels

Figure IV-1 shows the trend in staffing levels for the Parks Division. Overall, *the number of full-time staff within the division for FY 13 is lower than it was in FY 06.* The division had 88 full-time staff in FY 13, and 91 staff in FY 06 (not including vacancies). Throughout the intervening years, however, there were several fluctuations in the total number of staff. For example, staffing increased by 19 positions between FY 06 and its overall high in FY 08. Since that time, the number of staff steadily decreased to 88 positions in FY 13.

Figure IV-1. Parks Division Full Time Staffing Levels: FYs 06-13



Source of data: DEEP

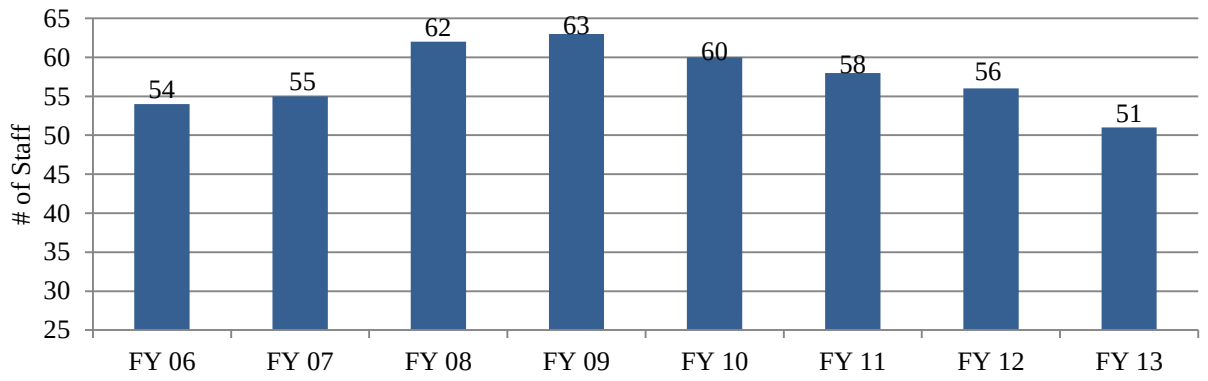
A closer look at various types of staff within the division and the staffing levels associated with those positions shows several trends. Namely, both field staff (i.e., maintainers

and supervisors) and administration staff increased increase from FYs 05-08, though the drop since FY 08 has been mainly in field staff.

Maintainers and Supervisors

As shown in Figure IV-2, the number of maintainers – employees who provide the bulk of park operations – decreased from 54 to 51 (6 percent) during FYs 06-13, after reaching a high of 63 in FY 09. (The Parks Division also notes, since FY 03, maintenance staffing levels have decreased 23 percent, due mainly to an early retirement incentive program in 2003 and a subsequent hiring freeze.)

Figure IV-2. Parks Division Maintenance Staffing Levels: FYs 06-13



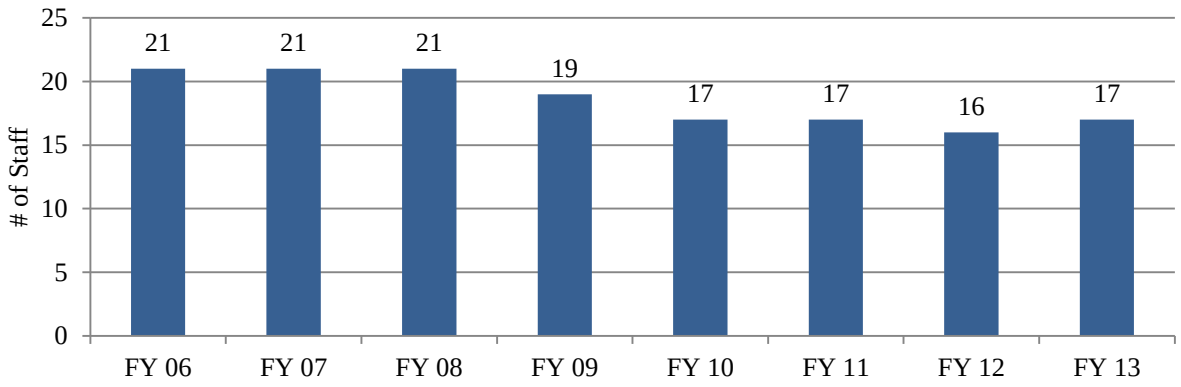
Source of data: DEEP

Maintainers are classified either as Maintainer 1, 2, or 3, with Maintainer 3 being the highest level (i.e., most experienced with the most responsibilities.) The number of Maintainer 3 staff within the Parks Division decreased from 45 in FY 06, to 34 in FY 13 – almost a 25 percent decline. At the same time, there was a doubling of Maintainer 2 staff, from 8 to 17. Moreover, there has not been any Maintainer 1 staff within the Parks Division since FY 10. The increase in Maintainer 2 staff and lack of Maintainer 1 staff are likely due to hiring freezes. New maintainers are not being hired at the Maintainer 1 level, and current Maintainer 2 staff are not being promoted as Maintainer 3 staff leave.

As illustrated in Figure IV-3, there was a downward trend in the number of supervisors within management units for FYs 08-12, from 21 to 16, with an increase of one supervisor in FY 13. Similar to maintainers, supervisors are classified as Supervisor 1 (fewest responsibilities), Supervisor 2, or Supervisor 3 (most responsibilities).[32]

[32] The official title of the person heading the Dinosaur State Park management unit is Environmental Education Coordinator, which has supervisory responsibilities but is not within the Environmental Protection Supervisor classification as all the other supervisor positions. As such, it is not included as part of the supervisor position analysis. For context, the position at Dinosaur has been filled since FY 06.

Figure IV-3. Parks Division Field Unit Supervisor Staffing: FYs 06-13



Source of data: DEEP

In addition to overall trends in maintainer and supervisor staffing levels, acres per staff person was examined. Table IV-1 shows the results.

Table IV-1. Yearly Acreage per Parks Division Supervisor/Maintainer: FYs 06-13.

Year	Total Acreage	# Supervisors	Acres/Supv.	# Maintainers	Acres/Maint.
2006	250,684	21	11,937	54	4,642
2007	251,539	21	11,978	55	4,573
2008	252,840	21	12,040	62	4,078
2009	252,958	19	13,314	63	4,015
2010	253,022	17	14,884	60	4,217
2011	253,580	17	14,916	58	4,372
2012	253,921	16	15,870	56	4,534
2013	255,025	17	15,001	51	5,000

Source of data: DEEP

Overall, *the number of acres each supervisor is responsible for increased almost 26 percent from 2006-13 to 15,001*. There was a steady increase in each year except 2013. For maintainers, the acres per maintainer increased just under 8 percent, from 4,642 acres to 5,000 acres. The trend for maintainers, however, was somewhat different than supervisors. While there was a steady increase in the total acres per supervisor, acres per maintainer actually decreased from 2006 to 2009, before steadily increasing each year thereafter, reaching the highest ratio in 2013.

At some point in time, the growth in responsibilities for supervisors and maintainers, including the total amount of land they are responsible for, becomes too much for a single person to manage effectively. According to DEEP, that time has come given the overall responsibilities within the areas it supervises. The Parks Division recently drafted a proposal to restructure the current model of state park unit management, citing that the present system is unsustainable. In short, six of the 23 management units either are supervised by supervisors also overseeing another unit, someone working Temporary Service in a Higher Class (TSHC), or not supervised at all. Given the TSHC appointments are set to expire and employees supervising more than one

management unit cannot do so effectively, several options have been presented by the department:

1) reconfigure the current management units for a more manageable structure for the current number of supervisors to reduce distances traveled among parks/forests with a unit, increase oversight and/or supervision of seasonal workers, and decrease response time for emergencies;

2) reduce public services available at parks where no supervision is available;

3) find a new corps of employees to serve in a TSHC capacity similar to now; or

4) have the two district supervisors begin supervising management units and risk reducing their ability to manage statewide projects. A more detailed discussion about minimum staffing both for supervisors and maintainers is provided later in this chapter.

Park Unit Point Evaluation System

Another staffing-related issue within the Parks Division is how to determine the overall boundary lines of park management units (see Figure I-1 in Chapter I) and, more specifically, the supervisor classification level (i.e., Supervisor 1, 2, or 3) necessary to oversee the management unit. Each of the division's management units is diverse in its overall characteristics. As such, their boundary lines and the corresponding level of supervisor should be based on objective criteria.

The Parks Division created a system to evaluate management unit characteristics in early 1993 and revised it in late 2012. The revised system has 28 different criteria upon which to base the management unit boundaries, and the subsequent level of supervisor required within the unit. The criteria include high and low use acreage, public use buildings and other physical plant characteristics, attendance, trails, paved/unpaved roads, campsites, and facility rentals. Each criterion is given a score and the total score determines the overall category of management unit – small, medium, or large. The corresponding supervisor levels are Supervisor 1 (small management unit), Supervisor 2 (medium management unit), and Supervisor 3 (large management unit).

The revised point system has not been implemented. This is due in large part to the ramifications of the shift and work location provision of the NP-5 union contract that impacts park supervisors and maintainers.[33] The Parks Division has said it is apprehensive about applying results of the revised point system given several of the criteria used in the system could change as a result of possible transfers every two years, impacting the overall staffing resources of the units. Another reason the appropriate supervisor levels have not been assigned to each management unit is due to the recent hiring freeze. *There is not an adequate number of supervisors at appropriate levels to fill the needs of the current 23 management units.* As a

[33] The collective bargaining group is the Protective Services Employee Coalition IUPA/IAFF, AFL-CIO. The term of the current collective bargaining agreement is July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2012, with an extension through June 30, 2016.

result, the supervisor structure within management units is not in accordance with the division's point evaluation system.

Shift Bid and Location Clause

Parks Division maintainers, management unit supervisors, and district operations supervisors (known as district managers) all belong to the same NP-5 collective bargaining unit, along with all other DEEP employees working in the same job classifications. Beginning the mid-2000s, the collective bargaining agreement contained the biennial posting of shift and location assignments. This provision requires DEEP, including the Parks Division and all other department divisions with similarly classified employees, to open its maintainer and supervisor positions every two years for lateral transfers.[34] Seniority is the governing factor to decide any transfer, provided the person making the transfer is qualified for the position.

In short, every two years, maintainers and supervisors within their particular classifications (e.g., Maintainer 2 or Supervisor 3) are given the opportunity to decide where they want to work. This includes maintainer and supervisor positions within other DEEP areas, namely the Fisheries and Wildlife Management Divisions and the Field Support Services unit. The process begins as soon as one person decides to change locations and "bump" a person of lower seniority. Given this structure, it is unclear how many positions could be affected in any round of transfers until the process plays itself out and no other transfers occur.

Three rounds of transfers have occurred since the contract provision for shift and location bidding was first fully implemented within DEEP. The Parks Division noted there were several transfers during the first two rounds in 2009 and 2011. Although these transfers caused some consternation among supervisors and managers, the overall number of moves was considered relatively minor by the division in comparison with the latest changes. In the most recent round in November, *24 maintainers – a full one-third – of the 71 eligible maintainer positions just within the Parks Division transferred to other positions:* 18 (25 percent) transferred to other parks within the division and 6 (8 percent) to other divisions within either natural resources or fiscal and support services bureaus. These transfers are shown in Table IV-2, which also shows that no one at the Parks Division supervisor level transferred in the most recent round, meaning all management unit supervisors and district supervisors stayed at the same locations as in 2011.

As the table shows, all of the transfers occurred within the maintainer job classification. Regarding Park Division employees, of the 34 Maintainer 3 staff within the division, nine (26 percent) transferred to another park location, while 4 (12 percent) transferred from a park to another division within another bureau (3 transferred to Fisheries, and 1 transferred to Field Support Services.) At the Maintainer 2 level, half of the 18 maintainers relocated to another park, and an additional 2 maintainers (11 percent) were transferred to another area outside of the Parks Division (i.e., Fisheries, Wildlife Management, and Field Support Services).

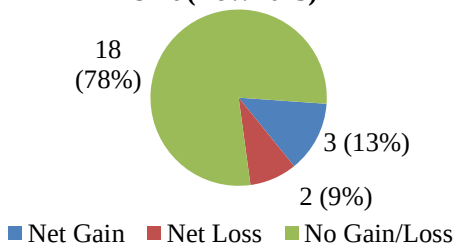
[34] This is because the position of Environmental Protection Maintainer, for example, is a broad job classification intended to be applicable experience-wise across multiple program divisions within DEEP.

Table IV-2. Parks Division Employee Transfers Per NP-5 Shift Bid and Location Provision: November 2013				
Position	**Total Eligible**	**Did not relocate**	**Park to Other Park**	**Park to Other Division**
District Supervisor	2	2	0	0
Supervisor 3	10	10	0	0
Supervisor 2	5	5	0	0
Supervisor 1	2	2	0	0
Maintainer 3	34	21	9	4
Maintainer 2	18	7	9	2
Maintainer 1	0	0	0	0
Totals	71	47 (66%)	18 (25%)	6 (8%)
Note: The official title of the person heading the Dinosaur State Park management unit is Environmental Education Coordinator, which is not within the Environmental Protection Supervisor classification and, thus, is not included as part of the supervisor positions in the table. The maintainer level at Dinosaur State Park is reflected in the table. Source of data: DEEP				

Regarding non-Parks Division employees, that is, those classified as DEEP maintainers but not working as park employees, six such maintainers (four Maintainer 3 and two Maintainer 2 staff) transferred into state parks from other areas within DEEP. Given the overall impact of the contract provision allowing shift bidding affects more than just the Parks Division, it is clear the division bears the bulk of the changes—18 maintainer staff moved around the park system, 6 moved out, and 6 moved in.

Figure IV-4 shows how the division's management units were affected by transfers resulting from the latest work location changes for maintenance staff only (since no supervisors were affected). Specifically, the figure shows whether units gained maintenance staff, lost staff, or remained at the same level. Eighteen of the units experienced no overall change in the number of maintenance staff. Three of the units had a net gain of one maintainer each, while two units had a net loss of one maintainer each.

Figure IV-4.Outcome of Lateral Transfers by Park Management Unit (Nov. 2013)



Source of data: DEEP

Despite the fact 21 (92 percent) of the management units were not negatively affected by the most recent transfers in terms of the overall number of maintainers within the unit, the changes are not without impact. In meetings with Parks Division staff, there was tremendous trepidation and frustration expressed as to the results of the most recent round of transfers.

Although the position of Environmental Protection Maintainer is considered a broad job classification with the ability to apply experience across multiple program divisions within

DEEP, park supervisors and managers disagree. This has led to uncertainty among supervisors as to the overall impact the transfers will have on park operations. They say many maintainers (and possibly supervisors in the future) who have been working at their particular park for a relatively long period time and gained the necessary, and oftentimes unique, knowledge that goes into maintaining (and supervising) the specific park unit, have been involuntarily transferred to another park unit due to the contract provision allowing such transfers.

As a result of the large number of recent transfers, there is an experience void that may or may not be filled by the incoming maintainers, or may take time to overcome. The division's main concern is that without a change in the contract provisions for DEEP maintainers/supervisors, the transfers will not stop, resulting in disrupted park operations every two years.

At the same time, there is strong consensus among park supervisors, district supervisors, and central office managers within the Parks Division that changes to the NP-5 contract language, at least regarding DEEP staff, are necessary to ensure stable and consistent park operations. The committee understands the division's concerns regarding the possible impact of the current contract language. The department should work within the appropriate channels/timeframe toward modifying the necessary NP-5 contract regarding the shift and work location provision with the end result of consistent and adequate state park operations.

Retirement Eligible

Table IV-3 shows the number of park supervisors and maintainers by their length of state service within particular ranges. Employees with at least 25 years of service are eligible to retire at any time, as long as they meet the minimum age range (employees' age information was not examined as part of this analysis).

As the table shows, almost two-thirds of the 18 *supervisors* have 25 years or more years of state service, meaning they are technically eligible to retire based on length of service. Sixteen *maintainers* - almost a third - have 25 or more years of service. Of all supervisors and maintainers, 28 percent of supervisors have 30 or more years of services, and 6 percent of maintains are at that threshold.

Table IV-3. Length of State Service for Park Unit Supervisors and Maintainers (as of 11/23/13)

	Supervisors	% of Total*	Maintainers	% of Total
< 10	1	6%	16	32%
10-19	5	28%	13	26%
20-24	1	6%	5	10%
25-29	6	33%	13	26%
30 or more	5	28%	3	6%
Totals	18		50	

* Totals may add up to more than 100 percent due to rounding.
Source of data: DEEP

It is important for the Parks Division to track employees' length of service as it relates to the overall ability of the division to staff its management units. Proper forethought is necessary as to how impending retirements may affect management units, particularly the number and size of management units if fewer supervisory positions can be filled due to hiring restrictions. The division has said it is aware of employees' length of service and takes that factor into consideration when examining supervisor positions and the overall configuration of park management units.

Minimum Supervisor and Maintainer Staffing

Many routine tasks require two maintainers to be present to perform safely (notably, using chainsaws, working with heavy equipment, or performing construction activities). Assuming the number of park management units should not be lower than the current 23 (including Dinosaur State Park), perhaps the simplest way to determine minimum staffing would be to assign each unit one park supervisor (to oversee general operation of the park unit and be available for weekend supervision of seasonal employees) and two maintainers (for daily operations and safety reasons).

With the current 23 park units, this would require 23 park unit managers (5 more than current employment given Hammonasset has 2 supervisors and Dinosaur has a supervisory education coordinator) and 46 maintainers (5 less than current employment). However, this situation is unlikely to be practical because of the increased responsibilities and duties for those in the busiest parks. In short, different management units have different minimum staffing requirements to maintain current services and safety. Throughout the recent hiring freeze and resultant loss of staff due to attrition, the Parks Division has put priority on having more than two full-time maintainers in a few park units, even at the expense of having one or none at other park units.

A more realistic estimate of system-wide minimum staffing would not reassign positions away from units with more than two maintainers or one supervisor. Eleven park units have more than two full-time maintainers and six units are at the minimum level of two, leaving six units with only one maintainer. Keeping the current second supervisor in place at Hammonasset (and supervisory position at Dinosaur), there are six units without supervisors.[35] Under this scenario, the parks division would need 12 new hires (6 unit supervisors and 6 maintainers) in order to come back to an acceptable, ongoing staffing level for full-time employees under the current 23 park management unit organization. The minimum ongoing staff level of 80 full-time maintainer and supervisor positions (up 12 positions from the current total of 68) would still leave the Parks Division at a slightly lower level than in FY 08 (84 positions).

Since several of the parks units without a dedicated supervisor are currently being overseen by a high-level maintainer working temporarily out of class and because the majority of current supervisors are former maintainers, it is likely that most of the supervisor positions will be filled from the maintainer ranks. Adding staff positions, in general, may help boost morale, which seems generally low based on committee staff interviews with DEEP field personnel.

[35] According to the Parks Division, the following units are covered by a supervisor from another unit or have employees working temporarily in a higher class: Lake Waramaug; Macedonia; Sleeping Giant; Peoples; Mashamoquet; and Pachaug.

More specifically, the additional 6 to 12 refilled or new positions available at various locations across the state would be offered first as internal transfers, which could go a long way towards addressing the side-effects of the shift-bidding relocations, as discussed earlier. A full recommendation on the overall funding mechanism for state parks, that incorporates funding for staffing, is provided in Chapter VI.

Seasonal Staff

The Parks Division relies on seasonal workers to augment its full-time operations staff. Seasonal workers include maintenance staff, campground managers, life guards, park rangers, and maintenance supervisors. The budget for seasonal staff accounts for roughly one-third of the overall personal services budget for the division.

Table IV-4 shows the trends in the number of seasonal staff as well as the number of workers converted to full-time equivalents (FTEs). The FTE comparison is made to better understand the overall trend in seasonal workers, given they are not full-time. The table also provides information on the number of seasonal staff hired for the first time in a given year and those rehired from the previous year.

Table IV-4. Seasonal Staff Totals and Original or Rehire: FYs 08-13

	Total Seasonal Staff	Full-Time Equivalent	Original Hire	Rehire
FY 08	636	266.8	281 (44%)	355 (56%)
FY 09	567	278.3	199 (35%)	368 (65%)
FY 10	649	294.5	235 (36%)	414 (64%)
FY 11	553	283.8	137 (25%)	416 (75%)
FY 12	583	279.3	186 (32%)	397 (68%)
FY 13	554	Data not available	181 (33%)	373 (67%)

Source of data: DEEP

Three main issues were raised by the Parks Division regarding recent requirements placed on seasonal staff: 1) the maximum number of hours seasonal staff may work during a given year of 1,040 hours (26 weeks) per person, with a required three-month break in service between periods of employment, is too rigid for the most effective use of seasonal staff; 2) changes made in 2009 for retired state employees who participate in the temporary worker retiree program (i.e., works up to 120 days a year following retirement), which includes parks seasonal staff,[36] establish a maximum of two periods that a retired employee may participate in the program and do not allow for the rehire of experienced state employees who work as seasonal staff;[37] and 3) the current pay scales for seasonal staff are too low to consistently attract employees.

The first and second issues above are state policies that would require statewide changes unless the department was able to get a special exemption for its seasonal staff. Regarding the pay scale issue, if using the percent of rehires as a benchmark, as shown in Table IV-4 above,

[36] See Executive Order 27-A, October 2009.

[37] Any Parks Division seasonal worker who is a retired state employee may only work a maximum 960 hours per year, instead of the 1,040 hours per year as other seasonal workers.

there does not seem to be a problem attracting seasonal workers from year to year: a full two-thirds of seasonal workers are rehires from the previous year. Additional analysis is needed, however, to determine if specific seasonal positions are difficult to fill.

Seasonal staffing compared to full-time staffing. In FY 12, according to national data, Connecticut had 99 full-time staff compared to 523 seasonal employees,[38] for a ratio of 5.28 seasonal staff to full-time staff. This puts Connecticut among the most dependent on seasonal staff (ranked 6th according to National Association of State Parks Directors FY 12 data for highest number of seasonal to full-time), well above the national average of 1.65 full-time to seasonal staff. Including Connecticut, twelve states had more than 3 seasonal employees per full-time staff, with 14 states having more full-time staff than seasonal (leading to a ratio less than 1).

While Connecticut's ratio is relatively high, the comparison may not be valid as some states report this information to AIX as full-time equivalents (FTEs) rather than total number of staff. In FY 12, Connecticut had 279 FTE of seasonal staff, or a 2.8 full-time staff to seasonal FTE ratio. This would mean the state ranks 12th highest rather than 6th - on the high side of average, but no longer among the very highest users of seasonal staff.

Without a major influx of funding specifically for adding full-time staff, it seems implausible there would be a significant shift away from the current reliance on seasonal staff to a higher degree than all but five other states. However, if the Parks Division is given more flexibility on hiring full-time staff in place of some seasonal staff (which are currently budgeted independently of each other), it is likely the state's relatively high dependence on seasonal staff would begin to move towards the national norm.

An important caveat for national comparisons regarding seasonal staff is that the employment rules and responsibilities of seasonal staff can differ considerably between states. Connecticut's seasonal staff is capped at 1,040 hours per person for the year, meaning a 40-hour per week seasonal employee can work 26 weeks, with a minimum layoff period of three months between periods of employment.

Other states may have similar requirements, but the differences can have a significant impact on park operations and planning. For example, most seasonal employees in the Pennsylvania park system are nine-month, full-time employees with a three-month discharge period before rehire. The extra three months allow Pennsylvania parks to have full staffing for the months in preparation for the busiest periods and a mostly full allotment of staff to help close parks following their heaviest use periods, with most seasonal staff absent for only the least used months in the winter. The longer-duration seasonal contract may also allow long-time seasonal employees greater stability. Staff in Pennsylvania indicated there were many returning seasonal staff who had other season-appropriate jobs in the winter.

Some other states, including Missouri, have approximately the same 1,040 hour annual limit, but have the flexibility to hire someone for those hours spread over the entire year. This means the individual parks can decide if a person is 6 months full-time, 12 months part-time, or some combination of the two, depending on the needs of the park.

[38] AIX data show that Connecticut reported 99 full-time staff for FY 12, which differs from the 92 full-time staff count provided by the Parks Division.

Chapter V

Park Use, Performance Measurement, and Planning

The state park system has different meanings and uses to different people; therefore determining whether service provision, and thus funding, is adequate depends on how the term is defined and who is defining it. Some view state parks as a way to provide outdoor recreation for the state's citizens, while others view parks as a way to protect natural spaces and/or preserve the state's heritage. Still others see the park system as a means of employment, while others may not use state park resources, but know their tax dollars support the system.

Adequacy of state park resources means finding the balance between the public's goals for parks and policymakers' willingness to fund a park system to meet those goals. For purposes of this study, three key measures of use were examined as they relate to the overall adequacy of funding for state parks: attendance; safety; and customer satisfaction. An assessment of the collection, analysis, and use of performance measures related to the key areas was also made.

Key Findings

- *The Parks Division methodology to collect accurate attendance statistics is flawed, and the current estimate is likely well off the actual number (probably undercounted). Although used in public discussion of the state's park system, attendance is not formally considered for planning or performance purposes.*

- *There is currently not enough full-time maintenance and supervisory staff to cover necessary park operation responsibilities within adequate safety guidelines; full-time park law enforcement officer levels are down, and the trend in public safety incidents within parks is mixed over the past five years.*

- *Ad hoc attempts have been made to collect customer feedback, yet no ongoing centralized system exists to collect and analyze such information.*

- *Short-term planning for the state park system has defaulted to attrition-based "crisis management" as the level of resources available to parks has decreased. Though various long-term planning documents have been created, there is little evidence suggesting these documents are used systematically.*

- *The Parks Division budget is based on previous expenditure levels rather than system needs. Field personnel are not involved in budget administration, which may lead to increased costs.*

Park Use Measurement

DEEP personnel at multiple organizational levels were asked how they measure park performance. The prevailing answers include examining attendance levels, safety information (of the public and of staff), and overall customer satisfaction (including cleanliness of parks and availability of varying programs and experiences). These areas were also the most commonly cited measurement areas by state park personnel in other states. Despite there being a system-wide emphasis on these key areas of performance, there was little evidence that data regarding these areas were analyzed by the Parks Division.

This chapter includes further discussion of the information currently collected by DEEP, an assessment of the methodologies in place to obtain park-use data, and an examination of how such data is, and might be, used to inform the division's planning efforts. From an overarching perspective, there is a lack of reliable aggregate information about park performance, and there is a "crisis management" nature regarding short- and long-term planning efforts. As such, it is apparent *the Parks Division does not engage in measurement of park performance to guide management decisions and resource allocations. Further, the division does not collect information on park use in a reliable, accurate manner such that the measure of use trends is currently possible.*

Recommendation

5. **The Parks Division should create a Results Based Accountability-style report card regarding park performance in accordance with the guidelines established by the legislature's Appropriations Committee. The report card should include measures regarding park use (e.g., attendance, safety, and satisfaction), as well as measures of park operations (e.g., planning efforts) and park personnel. The division's first report card should be developed by January 1, 2015, and annually thereafter. The report cards should be provided to the legislative committees of cognizance and made available on the Parks Division website.**

Creating the report card on an annual basis will assist the Parks Division in assessing, and attempting to meet, the needs of the public. It is expected that the regular reviews of park locations will play an important role in the report card development, especially with regard to individual park or park unit status and improvements. To further the implementation of the above recommendation, DEEP will need to first develop a Quality of Life statement, in RBA terms, to help guide the necessary data collection and performance measurement efforts to create its RBA report card(s). As an agency, DEEP has familiarity with Results Based Accountability, and has previously created report cards for its forestry and solid waste programs, which should aid in developing a state park system report card.

While an attempt is made to describe state park use within this chapter, the Parks Division does not possess adequate information to accurately describe park use trends in a comprehensive manner. What follows are descriptions of park use given the scarce and sometimes inaccurate information currently available, along with analysis of the department's current use information-gathering methodology for the key areas of attendance, safety, and customer satisfaction.

Attendance

The Parks Division cites attendance information on a regular basis. Official presentations and budget requests often include the division's overall estimate that approximately 8 million visitors, or more accurately visitor days, occur in Connecticut parks annually. However, the accuracy of the overall system-wide attendance estimate and of many individual park estimates is suspect. Inaccurate attendance information may lead to misallocation of scarce resources to or within the Parks Division that, in turn, may lead to declines in safety or customer satisfaction. The following are key findings regarding park attendance:

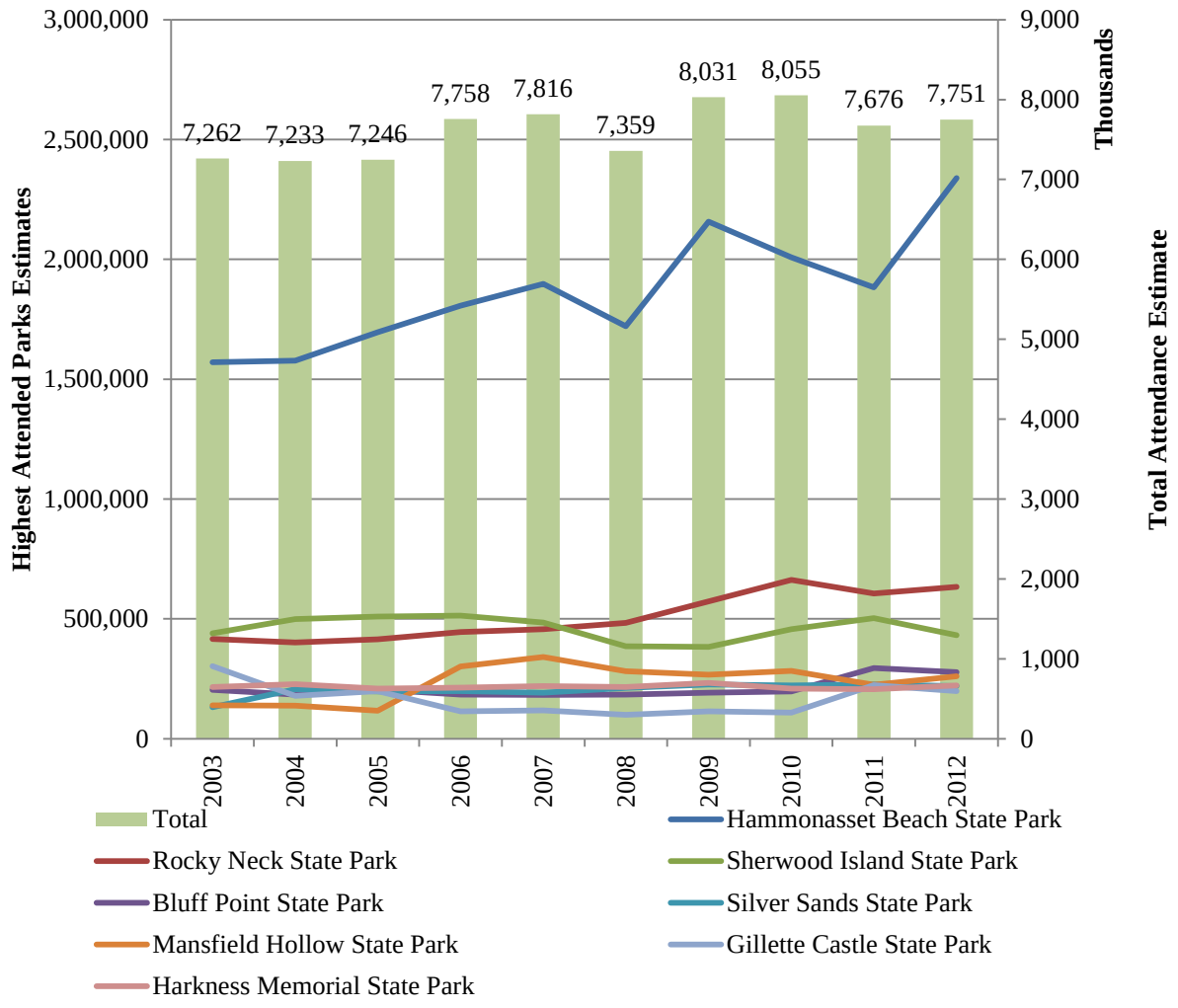
- *Attendance estimates and paid attendance records show park use has held relatively stable over the last decade.*
- *While the Parks Division has a formal policy on creating daily attendance estimates, the methodology has several flaws and is not currently followed in a consistent manner.*
- *The current attendance estimate methodology is overly burdensome to park supervisors, especially given the unreliable results it produces.*
- *The Parks Division is not using the reliable attendance data (i.e., numbers from paid day-use and camping fees) already being collected in a meaningful way.*

There are several components of park use that, in aggregate, should lead to overall attendance figures for state parks, including day-use receipts (parking and/or admission), camping fees, and estimates of use during non-fee days or hours. Park supervisors are asked to estimate day-use (fee-based and non) and camping numbers daily and report those numbers to the Parks Division office. Figure V-1 shows overall estimated attendance for CYs 03-12, along with the attendance estimates for the eight most attended parks, which collectively account for roughly half of the overall park attendance.

Total park attendance has been reported by DEEP as fairly steady, with between 7 and 8 million visitors per year within the past decade. Hammonasset, shown by the top line in the figure below, accounts for over a quarter of overall statewide attendance, so it is not surprising that total attendance trends mirror those at Hammonasset and vice versa. Rocky Neck and Sherwood Island form the second tier of highest attendance, each accounting for between 5-10 percent of the state's total. Aside from those three, no other park represents more than 5 percent of the total.

Attendance methodology. The Parks Division has a formal methodology for estimating the attendance at individual state parks. The individual park estimates are then aggregated to come up with an estimate of total statewide visits. The attendance methodology relies on park supervisors recording daily attendance estimates for some of the most-used parks in the state, based on the number of vehicles observed in the park. These daily estimates are recorded in a centralized database accessible to the unit supervisors and to Parks Division staff in the central administrative office. In total, estimates are required at 55 parks, inclusive of the 29 parks that charge for parking or admission.

Figure V-1. Overall Attendance Estimates and the Most-used Individual Park Attendance Estimates (CYs 03-12)



Source of data: DEEP

Methodological problems with creating the attendance estimates largely prevent these numbers from being valid or useful. In particular, there are three major issues affecting the overall estimate of attendance.

First, attendance estimates are only recorded for 55 of the state's 139 parks and forests. Without any information regarding the attendance in the 84 parks and forests that are not among the 55 where an estimate is supposed to be provided, it is not possible to determine if the 55 parks that are part of the attendance estimate represent: 1) the most-used of all 139 parks (in which case the overall attendance numbers would slightly increase if the other parks are included); 2) a majority of the most-used parks (whereby there may be a noticeable increase in overall park attendance estimates), or 3) a random sample of parks (which may lead to a sizeable increase in the attendance estimates).

Parks Division personnel indicate the list of 55 parks is used in order to maintain comparability to previous estimates, dating back decades, that also limited the estimates to the same parks. While it is unlikely that any single park of the remaining 84 accounts for a large difference in overall attendance, there should be some estimate given for these parks, even if only collectively. From this factor alone, it would appear the attendance estimates underrepresent overall park attendance.

Second, the division is not fully administering the methodology it has in place. In some instances, the designated parks are in park management units that do not currently have a park supervisor or are overseen by a park supervisor who is temporarily overseeing multiple units. For CY 12, there were attendance estimates for 49 of the 55 designated areas, with the number falling to 40 parks with any reported attendance for CY 13 by December of that year. Even within the parks that reported some amount of attendance for CYs 12-13, there are visible gaps for weeks or months when examining the daily attendance logs. Some of these data gaps are created because a supervisor is recording a month, or even a year, of attendance data in one day and leaving the rest of the days blank, while many of the gaps are because no information is entered for days, weeks, or even years at a time. Like the limitation to 55 parks, addressing the issue of non- or underreporting would increase the overall attendance estimate.

Third, the estimates themselves have large potential for error. Attendance estimates are calculated by counting the number of cars in parking areas at the designated parks each day and extrapolated for how many cars there were the entire day and then by how many visitors present in each car. Each factor of this process of estimation is subject to error (under- or over-reporting), which is multiplied by errors in the extrapolation process. It is unlikely that all park supervisors, especially those in geographically large units with multiple parks, are able to get to each park each day and further unlikely that they will be able to get to each individual parking area, if there are multiple entry points for a single park. Frequency of visits by park personnel for attendance estimates is lessened for those park units without a park supervisor assigned or with a supervisor who is temporarily overseeing multiple units.

Little, if any, uniform guidance has been given to the park supervisors on how to estimate a full day's worth of cars based on point-in-time observations. Per the attendance methodology, supervisors are given instruction to estimate four visitors per car, but multiple parks staff relayed that the number can and does vary by park and/or supervisor, sometimes with a higher than six or eight visitor per car factor. The attendance methodology does allow for variation in the visitor per car factor with the consent of the Parks Division director. It seems likely that the number of visitors per car will systematically differ among parks, but there should be some record or justification for the change as part of the formal methodology.

Further issues around the subjectivity of the current estimates include some park supervisors having incentive (even if subconsciously) to overstate their park's attendance to help secure additional resources for the park and/or better a unit's standing in the points system (discussed in Chapter IV). Additionally, it is understandably difficult to measure the attendance of walk-in visitors, especially for large parks with relatively easy walk-in access. As such, the issues with the subjectivity of park supervisor estimates of attendance may be leading to under- and/or over-reporting.

Taken together, *the flaws in the current attendance estimates suggest that the approximately 8 million visitor estimate the Parks Division uses in describing the park system is likely underrepresenting the true number of visitors to state parks.* However, given the issues described above, it is not currently possible to know if the true attendance is more than double or less than half the current estimate, or anywhere in between.[39]

Improving attendance estimates. There are several less subjective and less labor intensive ways to develop an attendance estimate that are more accurate and representative than the current methodology. Variations of solid attendance estimation methodologies are used in many other states and by the National Park Service. Recording the exact number of visitors is near impossible and expensive, so a more reasonable goal is determining an estimate that is reliable, not labor intensive, and useful. More accurate overall and individual park attendance estimates should allow for better long-term allocation of resources for relatively little on-going cost outside current responsibilities. *Connecticut's current attendance estimation methods can and should be improved.*

Recommendation

6. **The Parks Division should develop an improved attendance estimation methodology that: 1) spreads responsibility for point-in-time counts; 2) requires the performance of focused counts every five years; 3) uses quantitative numbers already available via revenue collection, and 4) expands the use of car counters.**

The first two components of the recommendation would relieve supervisors of the need to attempt to be everywhere every day. Instead of asking supervisors for full, extrapolated estimates in 55 areas each day, multiple employees can be asked to provide point-in-time observations in the course of their current responsibilities (e.g., supervisors, maintainers, and perhaps EnCon police may be asked to log the number of cars in a parking lot when they arrive at particular locations). Daily attendance would not be tracked each day, but the number of more accurate samples coming in would more than make up for this.

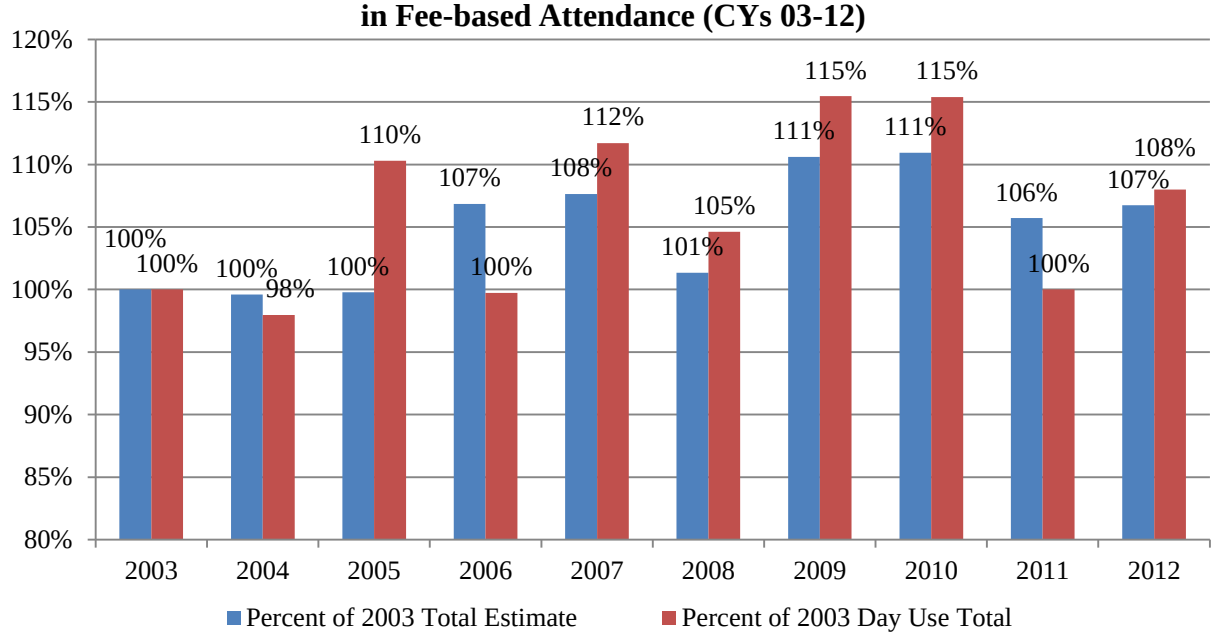
Next, each park should have a comprehensive count of visitors performed for at least one week in-season and one out-of-season on a rotating basis, in an attempt to look at complete attendance for these time periods. A major purpose of these counts will be to review and reestablish various extrapolation factors, such as determining the number of individuals per car and the relationship between total attendance for a day and point-in-time vehicle visitation. These comprehensive counts should be performed for each park at least once every five years, to reassess the extrapolation factors on a regular basis.

Fee-based attendance information. As previously mentioned, DEEP already collects public use data at 29 parks via collection of user fees. Park supervisors of units with parking and/or admissions fees are instructed to use the quantities of paid entrances as part of their

[39] The counts of day-use fees show over 300,000 vehicles paying for parking at state parks annually, which can be extrapolated to over 1 million paid visitors each year using a factor of 3 to 4 people per vehicle. Since there are no parking fees outside the parks season and relatively few parks charge for parking (and those that do charge often do not charge for weekday admissions), it is reasonable to conclude that even conservative estimates of attendance are likely to push the number of total visitors to well above the number of visitors who paid for entrance.

overall attendance estimates. Looking simply at day-use fees (parking and admissions) can help capture overall attendance trends. Figure V-2 shows the growth in the overall attendance estimate and the growth in the paid-visitor numbers compared to CY 03. It appears that the day-use totals show more extreme jumps year-to-year, while it takes longer for these trends to be noticed and included by the park supervisors in the estimates they provide.

Figure V-2. Changes in Attendance Estimates and in Fee-based Attendance (CYs 03-12)



Source of data: DEEP

Based on park-by-park comparisons, it is not clear that the places charging day-use fees are the most-attended parks. Of the 15 parks with estimated attendance of over 100,000 visitors for CY 11, only 10 charged parking fees at any point.[40] Table V-1 compares the number of parks by CY 11 overall attendance range to the number of parks charging admission in each attendance category.

Table V-1. Attendance ranges and entrance fees (CY 11)

Attendance range	# parks with estimated attendance levels	# of parks per attendance level with entrance fees
0-50,000	13	5
50,001 - 100,000	27	14
100,001 -200,000	7	4
Over 200,000	8	6

Source of data: DEEP

Besides not charging for parking at several of the most highly-used parks (or at least most highly-estimated-use parks), parking fees are only being charged at fewer than half of the medium-use parks (between 50,000 and 100,000 visitors a year).[41]

[40]One park with high attendance estimates not currently charging for parking, Silver Sands, is being prepared for charge for parking in the near future.

[41] Full discussion of park fees is in Chapter III.

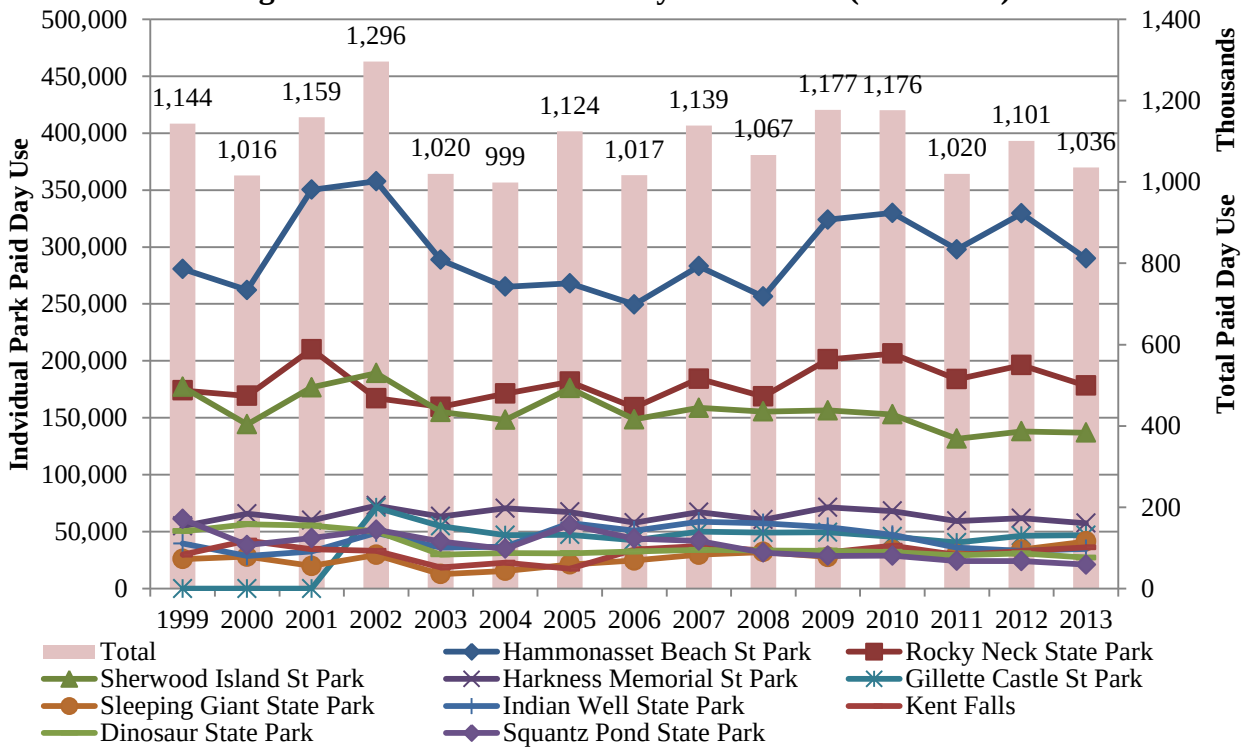
Unfortunately, with attendance estimates varying widely year-to-year for certain parks (including having estimates provided some years but not others), it is not possible to discern whether the above analysis shows that there is misalignment between park use and parking fees or whether the analysis further indicates the range of error in attendance estimates. However, the previously recommended regular park reviews and use of improved attendance estimates should allow the Parks Division to better understand and align fees and public use.

Recommendation

7. **The Parks Division should review the use and level of fees for each park location not less than once every five years, as part of an overall park review.**

For those parks that have been charging day-use fees, Figure V-3 shows overall paid day-use visitors as well as the paid day-use visitors for the top nine attended parks in CY 11.[42] Overall paid attendance has been approximately 20 percent of the total attendance estimate since 1999. The figure shows paid entrance to the state's most-used parks (Hammonasset, Rocky Neck, and Sherwood Island), which strongly mirrors the overall attendance estimate in that Hammonasset accounts for between one-quarter and one-third of all paid day-use visits with the next two accounting for more than 5 percent of the total paid day-use amount in a given year.

Figure V-3. Number of Paid Day-use Visitors (CYs 99-13)



Source of data: DEEP - Assumes 4 visitors per vehicle.
Parks with fewer than 20,000 paid vehicles in CY 13 are not shown individually, but are included in the total.

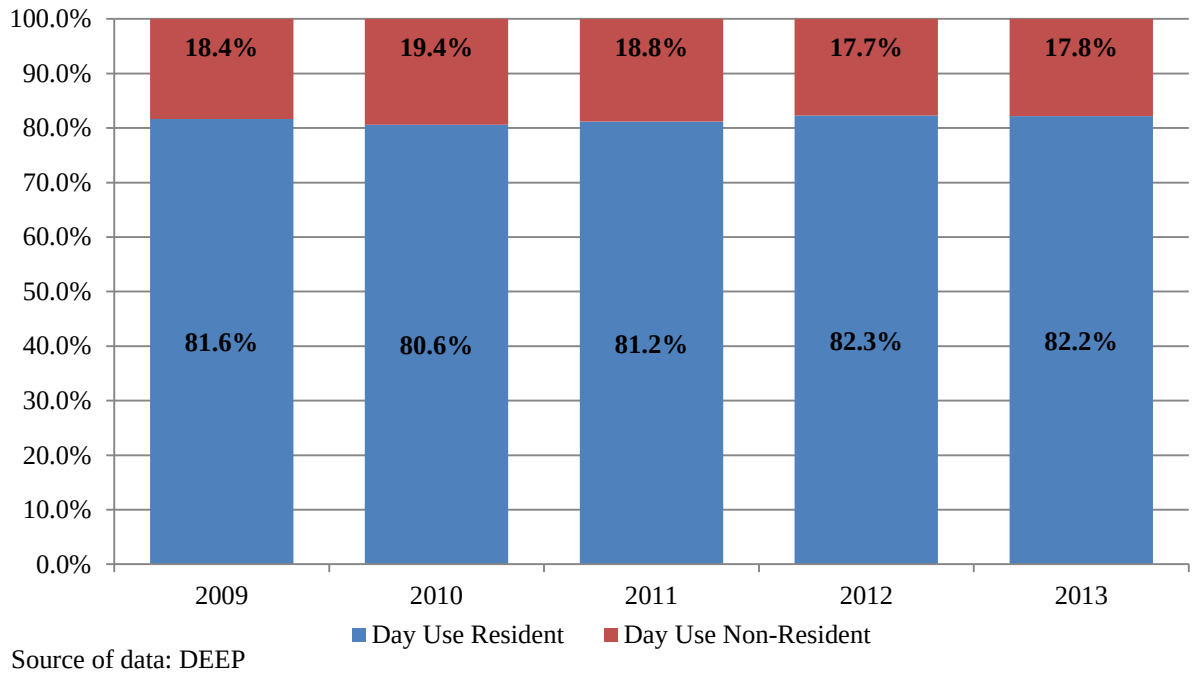
[42] Estimates in the figure include admissions and parking and assumes four visitors per vehicle, which is notably low for buses and mini-buses.

The correlation between overall paid day use and the day use specifically in Hammonasset is demonstrated by the parallel trends in the figure (i.e., each peak or valley in Hammonasset day use is accompanied by a similar peak or valley in the statewide day use numbers for the same year). Rocky Neck and Sherwood Island had very similar numbers of paid day-use attendance for CYs 99-08. Rocky Neck then saw a jump in paid day use for CYs 09-13, while Sherwood Island has overseen a slow but steady decline in paid day use in the same timeframe.

It is possible the current system of charging admission wastes resources in parks that do not warrant staffing a ticket booth as often or at all. Beyond this, better attendance estimates at parks currently charging may yield additional net revenues as more and better information is available on when vehicles are entering parks when those parks are not charging (i.e., after hours, weekdays, out of season). (More discussion on fees and revenues is provided in Chapter III.)

Connecticut resident use of state parks. Based on paid day-use data, residents have accounted for 82 percent of all single day entrance fees (parking or admission) since CY 09. As shown in Figure V-4, there has been very little fluctuation in the percentage of resident to non-resident use in the past five years. Season passes are purchased almost exclusively by Connecticut residents, who have accounted for 96-97 percent of season pass sales annual since CY 09.

Figure V-4. Percentage of Paid Day-use Visits by Residency Status (CYs 09-13)



Source of data: DEEP

Use of traffic counters. To help calculate attendance, the state currently has a single traffic counter, used in Sherwood Island.[43] The best practice from other states in estimating attendance and in helping to identify shifts in use of individual parks is to employ a network of traffic counters at park entrances. Ideally, each park entrance in the state would have a traffic counter permanently in place, though having a set of permanent counters at a broad sample of entrances or rotating sets of portable counters throughout the park system would also be preferable to Connecticut's current system for counting traffic in parks.

Recommendation

8. **The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection should use a portion of its bonding authorization for improving parks for purchasing car counters, such that vehicular traffic at all parks can be counted for weeklong or more portions of on- and off-season time periods by 2020, and during each subsequent five-year time period.**

Reasonably priced options are available for temporarily or permanently placing such counters at parks with and without electricity available at park entrances. Some of the parks in other states are employing technology that will record not just numbers between manual checks of the counter, but can also automate the population of a database of attendance information with counts within specific time ranges. The Parks Division should consider using technology to minimize the need for manual checking of the counts at physical locations where possible. Program review staff, through interviews with park personnel in other states, estimates the costs of car counters can range from less than $500 per temporary counter to several thousand dollars for permanent installation.

Safety

In addition to attendance, an indicator of state park system performance - and possibly determining whether resources are adequate for state parks - is safety. Although safety has different meanings and can be analyzed in multiple ways, the analysis presented below is based on various measures of visitor safety (focusing on incidents involving law enforcement response) and park employee safety. The key findings show:

- *the Parks Division understands park safety is important and coordinates with district managers and department law enforcement when safety issues arise;*
- *although adequate incident data exists, the Parks Division has not established formal park safety metrics, precluding it from systematically analyzing data to identify safety-related trends within the parks system;*
- *the trend in the total number of incidents, and several specific types of incidents, at state parks responded to by EnCon police is mixed since FY 08, although numbers may be indicative of changes in law enforcement staffing rather than changes in the actual number of incidents.*

[43] Traffic counters, or car counters, are devices placed at vehicular park entrances that record vehicle movement into and out of parks. They may be mobile/temporary or permanently placed. A wide range of technological options, at varying levels of sophistication, are available to assist in automated counts of vehicle traffic.

- *the number of full-time and seasonal law enforcement officers patrolling the state parks system decreased almost 10 percent since 2008;*
- *no grievances have been filed for employee safety issues in the last five years, and the trend in workers' compensation claims has remained relatively flat.*

During committee staff's interviews with various DEEP employees and outside stakeholders, it became clear the department views safety as one of its primary responsibilities regarding operation of the state's park system. As a way to begin examining safety within state parks, the Parks Division was asked how it measures safety in general. Although the division views safety as a key component of park operations, there is no aggregate analysis of incident data, including responses by law enforcement and accident/injury reports filed by lifeguards, by the division to determine system-wide trends in park safety. Instead, the division is focused on handling day-to-day issues as they arise. There also was agreement among the division's field staff interviewed that there is not enough focus on overall safety trends or system-wide planning.

At the same time, division management does contact the division's two district managers and park unit supervisors at times as a way to understand what safety-related issues are occurring. The division also is in communication with the environmental police (i.e., EnCon Police) division as a way to identify where resources are needed, namely on busy days in the summer months. (The police division has primary law enforcement jurisdiction within state parks.)

Despite this interaction, *the Parks Division does not regularly collect or analyze safety-related trend data, nor has it established safety performance measures.* The committee believes the Parks Division should begin monitoring overall safety trends to more fully understand what safety and incident trends are occurring on a macro level through a more proactive approach to safety data analysis.

Recommendation

9. As part of its RBA report card, the Parks Division should develop formal metrics of safety within the state park system, including safety of the general public and division employees. The division should collect and analyze applicable safety-related data necessary to identify trends in the annual number and types of safety-related incidents on a system-wide basis.

Park Incidents

The state park system offers a variety of recreational opportunities across a range of outdoor resources, including swimming, hiking, boating, and camping. Providing adequate safety within those vast resources is challenging. EnCon Police has primary law enforcement jurisdiction within state parks and forests, as conservation duties. The division provides patrol services through a combination of full-time police officers and seasonal officers.

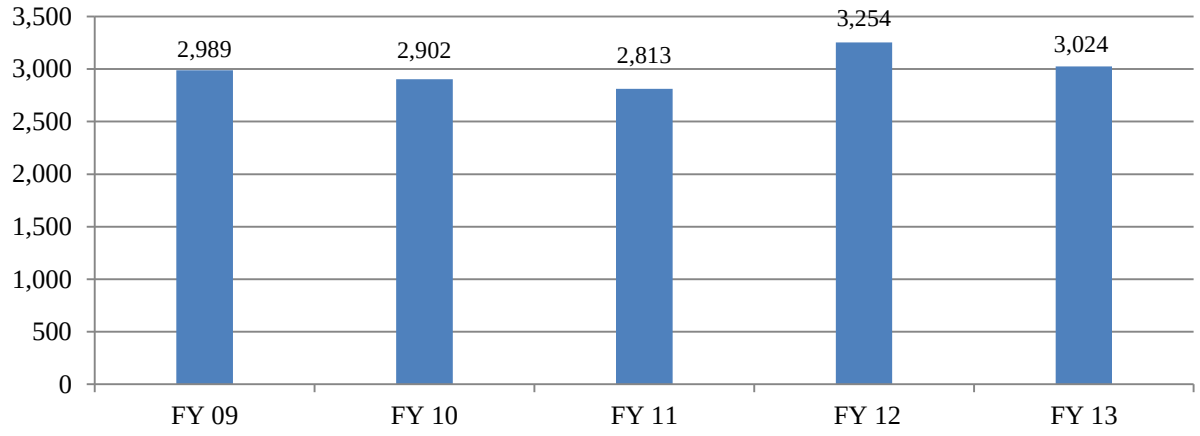
Park safety was examined in two ways: visitor safety and park staff safety. Given the Parks Division does not track aggregate safety measures, visitor safety was measured by the number of incidents occurring at state parks responded to by EnCon Police. Although a formal

review of the EnCon Police division was not a part of this study, incident data from the division was analyzed.[44] Safety of park staff was made by examining workers' compensation claims and safety-related grievances.

Incidents occurring at parks are wide-ranging and include motor vehicle and parking violations, fish/game regulation enforcement, dog violations, alcohol violations, and domestic violence situations. There are times when safety issues within the park system involve the EnCon police, state police, municipal police, or other first responders, as well as non-police staff, namely lifeguards and seasonal park rangers, though the percent responded to by EnCon is unknown.

Incident information provided by EnCon was analyzed as one way to describe park safety. Figure V-5 shows the number of incidents on an annual basis and the trend in incidents for FYs 08-13. An incident is defined as any time an EnCon officer (full-time or seasonal) responded to a call for service or self-initiated an enforcement activity.

Figure V-5. Incidents at State Parks/Forests Responded to by EnCon Police: FYs 09-13



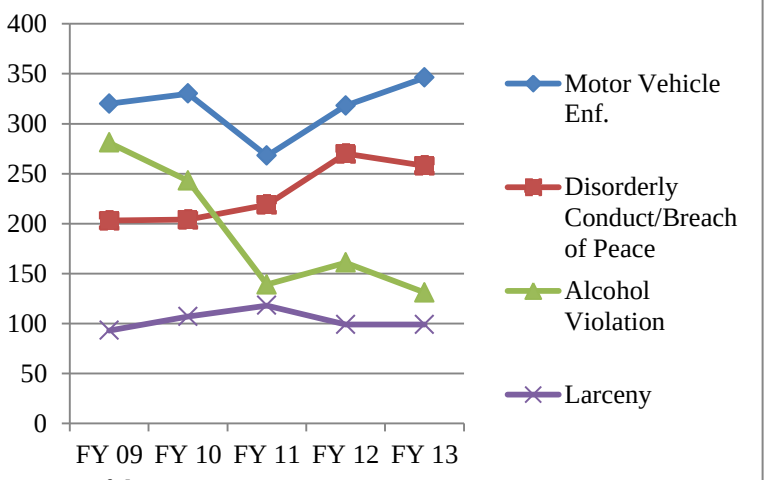
Source of data: DEEP

The figure includes all types of incidents occurring at state parks and forests. *The overall trend in incidents at state parks responded to by park law enforcement is mixed.* For FYs 09-11, the total number of incidents at parks and forests decreased from 2,989 to 2,813. The number then increased to 3,254 in FY 12, before decreasing again to 3,024 in FY 13. As expected, incidents occurring at the three main shoreline parks accounted for a large percentage of incidents in comparison with the other parks. In addition, it is important to note that the number of reported incidents may be influenced by attendance and police other than EnCon responded to incidents.

[44] The Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee conducted a full study of the State Environmental Conservation Police in 2006.

Types of incidents. There are dozens of types of incidents occurring at state parks that EnCon responds to and tracks, including motor vehicle law enforcement, enforcement of alcohol rules, disorderly conduct/breach of peace, dog regulation enforcement, and trespassing enforcement. Although all types of incidents may affect a visitor's overall enjoyment of a state park, the vast majority of incidents are non-violent and do not appear to directly impact visitor safety, namely parking violations, which are among the highest of all incidents. At the same time, there are certain categories of incidents that could impact safety within parks or a person's perception of whether parks are safe.

Figure V-6. Public Safety-Related Incidents in State Parks/Forests: FYs 09-13



Source of data: DEEP

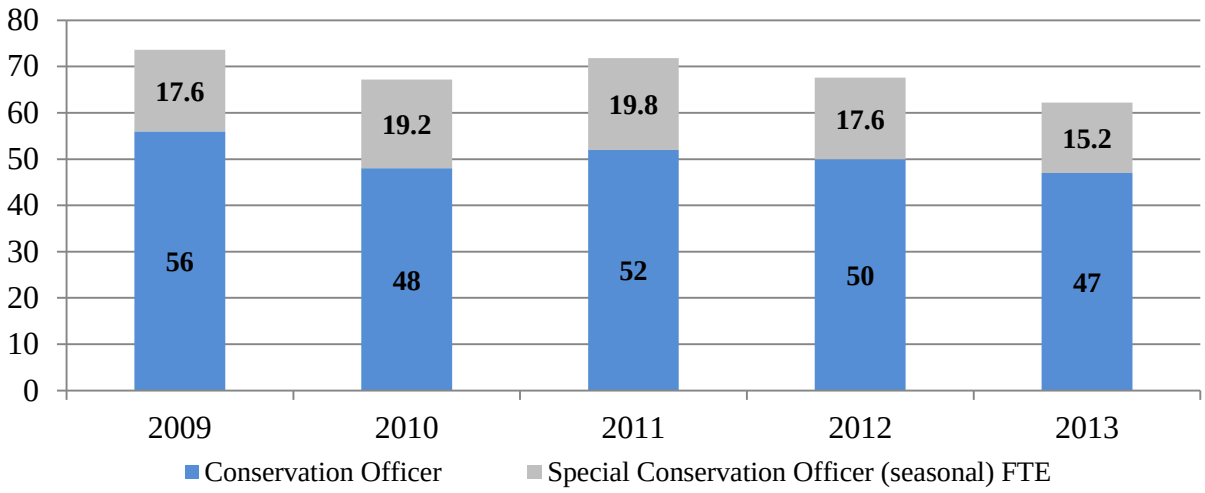
The following relevant categories were examined to identify whether trends exists: 1) disorderly conduct/breach of peace; 2) enforcement of alcohol violations; 3) larceny; and 4) enforcement of motor vehicles laws (e.g. speeding). Figure V-6 shows the number of such incidents since FY 09. In short, the highest number of incidents occurred within the category motor vehicle enforcement, which increased since FY 11. Alcohol violations have been on a downward trend, while disorderly conduct/breach of peace showed an upward swing since FY 10, but decreased somewhat in FY 13. Incidents involving larceny remained relatively steady over the five years examined.

EnCon staffing. The EnCon police division's staffing levels were examined to identify any possible trends related to safety resources.[45] Figure V-7 shows the total number of conservation officers (i.e., full-time) and the full-time equivalent special conservation officers (i.e., seasonal officers).[46] Staffing levels ranged from a high of 73.6 in FY 09, to a low of 62.2 in FY 13. There has been an overall decrease of 11.4 (15 percent) full-time and seasonal staff over the five-year period examined. Specifically, full-time staffing decreased from 56 to 47, while seasonal staff fell from 17.6 to 15.2. A statistical correlation between incidents and number of staff was not determined for this study.

[45] An obvious measure of safety within state parks is determining whether adequate police coverage is available to meet their needs. Ultimately, the level of safety within state parks is predicated in large part upon annual policy decisions to fund a certain number of environmental conservation police officer positions to patrol state parks. The allocation of EnCon officers by location and shift as they relate to state parks was not reviewed in this study.

[46] Seasonal EnCon officers receive the same training as municipal police officers throughout the state.

Figure V-7. EnCon Police Staffing: FYs 08-13



Source of data: DEEP

Coordination between parks and EnCon police divisions. During the months three shoreline parks are open (Hammonasset, Rocky Neck, and Sherwood Island), each has an EnCon field office. This provides police presence at these parks for each day and evening shift (8:00 a.m.-1:00 a.m.) to cover increased daily activity and camping. In addition, the division directors from Parks and EnCon Police meet weekly to discuss police services for state parks. District EnCon captains and sergeants also meet with park supervisors and district managers. As mentioned above, however, there is little analysis of aggregate police activity data by the Parks Division on a consistent basis to identify system-wide trends. The committee believes this is important as a way to help establish pro-active initiatives to deal with safety issues rather than on a reactive basis.

Park supervisor authority. Park supervisors used to be certified municipal police officers with the same law enforcement powers as conservation officers. Although supervisors no longer have this authority, several supervisors expressed interest in regaining the ability to issue simple infractions (i.e., parking tickets) to help rectify certain nuisance issues arising at parks and affecting park operations. Other supervisors, however, believe their time is severely limited with their current responsibilities and adding another function, especially one that requires ongoing training, would only serve to decrease time devoted to their present duties. Those same supervisors also discussed that even issuing a "simple" infraction may escalate an issue that otherwise either would have been ignored or dealt with through direct conversation, not to mention adding administrative duties they do not have time to fulfill.

The committee understands both sides of this issue. With proper training park supervisors might benefit from the authority to issue infractions, particularly for parking violations, which consistently rank among the top incidents responded to by EnCon. Such ability could add a level of operational control and visitor safety to state parks, and has the potential to free up conservation officers to provide more proactive police services. At the same time, there are administrative and training responsibilities that park supervisors and EnCon police may not have the resources to fulfill.

Employee safety. As discussed earlier, having a minimum staffing level of two maintainers per park unit for safety reasons is not met within some units. The possibility of decreasing employee safety, therefore, exists in those units. To more fully examine overall employee safety within the parks system, two indicators relative to safety were analyzed: 1) the trend in the number of workers' compensation claims filed by maintainers and supervisors; and 2) the number of safety-related grievances filed by maintainers or supervisors, or their union. Any increases in these areas could be an indication of decreased employee safety within state parks.

Park supervisors and maintainers receive initial and periodic health and safety training through the DEEP Office of Health and Safety, and on-the-job training at the management unit level. The annual number of workers' compensation claims for FYs 10-13 ranged from 12 to 23. Although there was an increase in the number of claims filed in FY 13, no definitive conclusions can be drawn with respect to the overall number of claims. That claims remained relatively constant, except for FY 13, suggests there was nothing extraordinary in any of the previous years as far as overall employee safety is concerned.

According to DEEP, there were no safety-related grievances filed for FYs 09-13 by maintainers, supervisors, or their union. On one level, this indicates workplace safety is satisfactory among field employees. On another level, there are many reasons why union grievances either are or are not filed, which would need additional analysis to fully determine.

Customer Satisfaction

People use state parks for different purposes and have different experiences based on multiple factors. As a way to understand visitors' satisfaction with park operations, committee staff examined whether the Parks Division has a structured system in place to measure customer satisfaction, the measures used within that system to determine performance, and the overall performance of parks. The key findings show:

- *Various methods exist to collect customer feedback, yet no customer satisfaction metrics have been developed; no aggregate review of customer satisfaction data exists to determine systemic problem areas, or areas where performance is positive.*
- *Results from an online survey conducted by the Parks Division shows the public is satisfied with their state park experience, yet some improvements should be made.*
- *Parks serve a wide cross-section of the public with varied interests, yet park supervisors say conflicting park uses do not cause many problems within the parks system; one issue of consistent debate, however, is the use of all-terrain vehicles on park land.*

As highlighted in the main recommendation at the start of this chapter, the committee proposes the department use customer satisfaction measures to help determine the overall performance of the state park system. Similar to measurement of attendance and park safety, the development and measurement of customer satisfaction should be geared toward the department

answering the three primary RBA questions of "how much did we do?" "how well did we do it?" and "is anyone better off?" as they relate to the overall results statement (i.e., Quality of Life in RBA terms) developed for the state park system and necessary for completion of the recommended RBA report card.

Several methods to collect customer feedback have been implemented by the Parks Division with varying degrees of success toward a system-wide understanding of customer satisfaction. Two formal methods for park attendees to rate their satisfaction and indicate areas for improvement are an online survey developed by the division and implemented in 2008, and postcards available at park unit and district offices. Both methods have been helpful to the division to understanding issues at individual parks, yet *there is no formal aggregate review of customer satisfaction data to identify areas systematically in need of improvement based on specific performance measures. The division recognizes its analysis of customer service information is more on a reactive basis than proactive.* For example, there is no "customer satisfaction" database for the postcard information, and the online survey is examined on a case-by-case basis without analysis of overall themes or trends. This is not to say the customer feedback information is not used, but a system-wide analysis could make it more useful. At the same time, the division notes the vast majority of park customers simply provide their feedback directly to park staff, which is difficult to quantify, but still important for park operations.

DEEP online survey results. Customer feedback information from the division's online survey was analyzed by committee staff. The survey consists of 20 questions about a variety of topics. Responses to several of the more relevant issues to this study are summarized below. The results are aggregate (i.e., not by fiscal year), and include all 1,450 responses received by the division since mid-2008.

- 92 percent said they enjoyed their visit (n=1,416).
- 78 percent said staff were helpful (n=869).
- When asked to rate the conditions/use of 22 different factors of the park they visited, the top three responses receiving the most number "excellent" or "good" ratings were (in order):[47] Parking area (n=988); Highway signs to locate park/forest (n=971); Buildings/grounds (n=846).
- When asked to rate the conditions/use of 22 different factors of the park they visited, the bottom three responses receiving the most number "fair" or "poor" ratings were (in order): Restrooms (n=233); Informational signs within park/forest (n=166); Trail maps (n=162).
- 55 percent said the parking fee does not deter them from visiting a Connecticut state park/forest; 45 percent said it does. (n=1,332)

Using the survey results above, it is clear that most people enjoyed their visit to a Connecticut state park/forest.[48] The results also show areas where customers rated parks services well and areas where improvement seems to be necessary. The committee understands there are caveats with the survey and its results, particularly given the low number of responses

[47] The rating scale used for each factor was "excellent," "good," "average," "fair," "poor," and N/A.
[48] At least of those who have selected to find and complete the online survey.

in relation to the overall number of visitors over the timespan examined. The overall results, however, show mostly positive customer satisfaction with state parks and forests.

Another area of interest to the committee regarding state park use is the overall accessibility within parks. The department is cognizant of making parks, to the extent feasible within their overall natural condition, accessible to visitors of all physical capacities. For example, all capital projects associated with physical structures are completed in compliance with federal and state accessibility requirements. The department's park system website lists all the amenities that are accessible for park visitors with physical challenges.[49] For example, accessible parking and picnic tables are available at all park and forest recreation areas, and most of its public buildings and restrooms are accessible. There are accessible campsites, fishing piers, and swimming areas/beach surf chairs at various state parks and forests. One trail (Saugatuck Universal Access Trail in Redding) is wheelchair-accessible with a platform overlooking the Saugatuck Reservoir.

Conflicting uses. The consensus among park supervisors during this study was despite public perception at times, there are relatively few conflicts with regard to how parks are used (e.g., hiking, bird watching, beach-going, horseback riding), and that the general public seems satisfied. The supervisors referenced some parties have isolated issues with people using parks in ways that conflict with their own, but from a system-wide perspective the issues are usually relatively minor and resolved quickly.

It should be noted that conflicting uses is not the same as whether or not adequate opportunities exist for a particular category of use or users. For example, even though customer satisfaction is relatively high, based on the information provided above, users of Connecticut's park system may not believe enough of a certain type of use is available.

One such issue area that receives frequent attention is the use of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) on state park and forest lands.[50] Within the statutory language governing state parks and forests, ATV operation is prohibited on state land without first obtaining a certificate from the DEEP commissioner and unless the vehicle is properly registered.[51]

State law also requires DEEP to evaluate the properties under its jurisdiction and the jurisdiction of other state agencies for potential use by ATV operators, and must make available some of the properties for ATV use.[52] In making the properties available, the department must consider minimizing the impact of all-terrain vehicles on the environment. Before making any property available that is under the jurisdiction of another state agency, the department must consult with such agency. The department is also required to adopt regulations, in consultation with the motor vehicle department, to: 1) establish standards and procedures for ATV operator certification and the use of all-terrain vehicles on state land; 2)

[49] http://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?a=2716&q=325078&deepNav_GID=1650

[50] C.G.S. Sec. 23-26a defines an all-terrain vehicle as a motorized vehicle, not suitable for operation on a highway that (1) is not more than fifty inches in width, (2) has a dry weight of not more than six hundred pounds, (3) travels on two or more tires specifically designed for unimproved terrain, (4) has a seat or saddle designed to be straddled by the operator, and (5) has an engine with a piston displacement of more than fifty cubic centimeters.

[51] C.G.S. Sec. 23-26b.

[52] C.G.S Sec. 23-26c.

setting a fee sufficient to cover the cost of implementing the certification program; and 3) establishing safety requirements for the operation of all-terrain vehicles on state land.

To date, no regulations have been adopted as required by statute regarding an ATV certification program for use on state land. DEEP, however, has developed a set of internal guidelines governing the certification process for ATV use on state land.[53] A procedure has been established for DEEP's review of any organization proposing an ATV facility on state land. Among other requirements, the organization must be a corporation registered with the state, and be able to demonstrate it has the resources and capacity to fully develop, operate, and maintain an off-road vehicle facility.

There is a two-step review process within DEEP, including a public meeting with the municipality where the proposed facility would be located, to examine ATV facility proposals. The key factor guiding the proposal process is the organization proposing the facility must show the facility is compatible with protection of the natural resources within the site. Any organization with an approved proposal must then enter into a concession agreement with the department for the ATV facility site's development, operation, and maintenance. At the same time, however, DEEP's position on its ATV policy and procedures is that they require additional legislation to become effective.

Given increased attention to use state land for off-road vehicle use, DEEP commissioned an evaluation of possible areas to operate ATV facilities in 2010. The study developed criteria for siting an ATV facility, and identified six state forests that should be evaluated against those criteria to determine if such parks could contain ATV facilities based on the criteria.[54] The study also recommended a second study phase to actually do the evaluation, which has yet to begin.

Public Act 13-237 required DEEP to implement its 2002 ATV facility proposals. The public act, however, was vetoed by the governor. In his veto message, the governor cited that any new legislation regarding ATV use be a balanced approach, which he believed the act did not. The governor also urged all parties interested in changing policies for ATV use on state land to craft legislation that would support creation of sustainable ATV trails. The current procedures developed by DEEP remain unimplemented.

Practices in several surrounding states show Rhode Island does not specifically designate trails in state forests for off-road vehicles, including ATVs (all-terrain vehicles cannot be legally registered in the state). The state does allow legally registered motorcycles (including off-road motorcycles) to ride along dirt roads within state forests as long as the rider holds a valid motorcycle license. In Massachusetts, ATV trails have been designated in eight state forests. Special permits are required to ride in three of those forests and there is a cap on

[53] See: State of Connecticut, Department of Environmental Protection, All TerrainVehicle Policy and Procedures, November 2002.

[54] These criteria are based upon similar criteria adopted by Massachusetts Department Conservation and Recreation; field observations during part one of the evaluation, a review of existing documents on the effects of ATVs, informal interviews with ATV users throughout the United States, and knowledge of State environmental laws and regulations (see: Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection: All Terrain Vehicle Facility Siting Study, *Baystate Environmental Consultants, Inc. (A GZA Company), May 2010*

the number of riders per day in those three parks. In New York, the state bans ATVs (and other off-road vehicles) from state parks and forests.

Planning

Another piece of examining park use and performance measurement is determining the extent to which the Parks Division uses the available data to make informed decision for short- and long-term planning. The key findings in this area include:

- *Parks system planning is "crisis" driven.*
- *Park operations and planning are not performance-based, with data under-gathered and under-used.*
- *It is not clear whether current resources are optimized; budget cuts and the lack of position refill authority may hamper these efforts.*
- *Budgeting for parks is based on a top-down approach that requires the division to do as much as possible given a resource level, rather than being based upon the amount of resources required to efficiently operate the park system.*

Planning for state parks is performed in several ways and at multiple organizational levels within DEEP. As previously mentioned, capital projects in parks are subject to normal bond reviews, with smaller capital projects (under $500,000) subject to specific review by DEEP's project review committee.

Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. A formal planning document, the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), is produced by DEEP every five years as part of a federal requirement for fund appropriation. Creation of the SCORP allows the state to continue to receive an annual apportionment of the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund. The most recent SCORP for Connecticut was created by DEEP in 2011 and runs through 2016. As the title suggests, the SCORP focuses on outdoor recreation provision, the primary responsibility of the Parks Division and its parent Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. Within the current SCORP, the plan is described as "a planning document that identifies outdoor recreation issues of statewide significance and evaluates the supply of and the demand for outdoor recreation resources and facilities in Connecticut."

The department conducted surveys about park use for the 2005 version of the plan, but, because of Connecticut's broader budget issues at the time, the 2011 plan was created to be an update to the more comprehensive 2005 plan. The division asked users to give preferences for a variety of outdoor activities and related facilities. The SCORP also includes a number of major goals, and accompanying sub-goals, for the department. Most of the stated goals include some parks division involvement, but also require broader cooperation within the agency, especially with the Bureau of Natural Resources (BNR). Three of the plan's six goals appear particularly relevant to the parks division:

- Connecticut will maximize public access to outdoor recreation resources.
- Connecticut will maximize the variety of outdoor recreation resources.

- Connecticut will engage in public outreach to better inform residents and visitors about the availability of outdoor recreation resources and of the many personal and community benefits of participation.

Each of the goals is accompanied by a detailed list of recent accomplishments, ongoing initiatives, challenges in meeting the goal, and objectives to overcome those challenges. The plan does provide a good overview of the current system and attempts to quantify user demand (including changes in use). However, beyond listing objectives for each goal, the plan does not specifically prioritize those objectives or outline specific steps to enact the listed objectives. Further, *while the SCORP is recognized as the parks planning document of record throughout the relevant bureaus and divisions of DEEP, no formal or systematic use of the plan was evident for either system-wide budgeting purposes or day-to-day operations decisions.*

2003 Infrastructure Conditions Assessment. As discussed in Chapter II, the 2003 Clough, Harbor and Associates (CHA) Infrastructure Conditions Assessment provided a detailed inventory of the parks system's most-used areas and resources while giving estimates of the personnel and other resources necessary to maintain all of the parks and related facilities on an ongoing basis. The estimates of the resources necessary were large increases over the 2003 staff and budget levels, which would be even larger increases today given the declines in staff since that time. However, the CHA document may have represented more of a best-case scenario for park operations than a minimum baseline. The CHA report did provide useful budget estimates for repairs and capital improvements, but such estimates seemingly did not account for scenarios in which under- or unused resources are removed from the system. However, the report provided tools and information with which DEEP could prioritize projects within individual parks and across the state park system (see Appendix E), but, a decade later, there is not evidence these tools have been used recently.

There are now significant issues with reliance on the document going forward. The document is over 10 years old. Park resources have changed through additions and subtractions to the system since the time of the report, but the underlying inventory and conditions of the park infrastructure have not been consistently updated. Additionally, because the budget and personnel allotted to parks never matched the amounts listed in the report, it is likely any prioritization efforts at the time the report was introduced were mostly limited to projects deemed urgent and/or health or safety related. The result is a large backlog of projects that were not listed as urgent at the time.

Parks Division planning. Overall, there is evidence of planning at all levels of the parks division, but the group of plans does not appear to be systematic or guided by overarching division-wide priorities. Further, while projects proposed by park unit supervisors are vetted by several levels of administration before they are implemented, *there is not sufficient guidance given from the management levels to the district and park supervisors on project priorities*. Additionally, there is not clear communication to park unit supervisors regarding rejected or non-approved project proposals for at least those proposals put before the Project Review Committee, so that such proposals may be modified for future consideration.

Projects may be efficiently implemented in individual parks, park management units, or within the Eastern and Western Districts. However, without guidance on division-wide priorities,

it is likely that there is duplication of effort across park units or districts or even projects implemented that work at cross purposes.

Recommendation

10. The Parks Division should develop written criteria and procedures for project approval based on the division's system-wide priorities. This should be updated regularly and distributed to park unit supervisors and district managers upon revision. The status and evaluation of merit, based on fit with the established criteria and priorities, of all project applications that move beyond the district level should be communicated, in writing, to the park unit supervisor who first completed the application.

This recommendation should help ensure the limited resources available to the department, including the time and effort to develop project proposals, are devoted to those projects that fit into the division's system-wide priorities. Additionally, these changes should inform park unit supervisors as to whether non-approved projects are worth resubmitting for consideration.

Budgeting process. The current budgeting process for the state park system, like most state agencies, is a top-down approach and one that is based, in large part, on current services and reductions, where possible or when requested as part of the statewide budget. Development of the Parks Division budget is no exception.

At present, DEEP's Financial and Support Services Bureau, which develops the budget for the entirety of DEEP, examines individual park management unit expenditures from the previous year, including full-time and seasonal staff expenditures, fixed expenses, and discretionary expenses. This budgeting process is not unique to parks or DEEP. Like most state agencies, much of the budget for parks is been determined by factors outside the department's control, including personnel costs for full-time employees (i.e., through collective bargaining restrictions and the recent state employee concession agreements) and the fixed costs associated with each park unit (e.g., utilities). After applying any department-wide reduction budget directives from the Office of Policy and Management, a Parks Division budget is set.

Very little of the budget, if any, is determined by park personnel at the field level explaining to DEEP management the financial needs of an efficiently run park. Rather, the Parks Division is given a level of financial resources and asked to do as much as possible while keeping public services available. This has led to a disconnect within the budgeting process for state parks. *Neither the two district managers nor park unit managers are substantially involved in the budgeting process and do not provide input on budget matters. As a result, true budgetary needs, at the management unit level or in aggregate for state parks, are not fully considered.*

Recommendation

11. The Parks Division shall perform a formal review of a portion of the park system locations and resources therein on a rolling basis such that all park system locations are reviewed at least once by 2020. The review shall include an inventory and assessment of the condition of resources and facilities as well as an

examination of the staffing needs of each location and shall be updated for each park location at least once throughout every subsequent five-year period.

The timing of these reviews is such that the results should inform the department in developing future SCORPs. The reviews should aid the budgeting and planning process by creating a regularly updated list of the maintenance status and financial needs of the entire inventory of park's facilities and other resources. Having this complete list and keeping it current is crucial towards long-term planning goals and should allow for greater coordination of effort between park units, districts, and other park-related divisions of DEEP. Also, these reviews can serve as a time to take stock of current uses and offerings of particular parks to determine if and how public needs for outdoor recreation are being met and to reiterate how each park might best meet the outdoor recreation goals of the state, as outlined in the SCORP.

Field staff's role in the budgeting process. Field staff are only formally involved in the administration of the budget for seasonal employees. The overall state park seasonal employee budget is divided into management unit shares by DEEP's Financial Services unit in consultation with Parks Division management. Each park unit supervisor is given a lump sum budget for seasonal employees for his or her particular park unit near the beginning of the parks season.[55] Park unit supervisors are expected to meet the personnel needs within the total and under the restrictions detailed in Chapter IV. Though unit supervisors have control and responsibility for managing their unit's seasonal budgets, the seasonal budget amount for each unit is typically based on prior budgets, minus any reductions, and not necessarily on unit supervisor or district manager input.

Prior to the elimination of the Environmental Conservation Fund in FY 10, park unit supervisors retained a small portion of park-generated revenue through the use of park unit specific enterprise funds (i.e., revenue from sale of firewood and ice), which could be used for minor projects or new equipment at the unit supervisors' discretion. With that source of funding no longer available to the unit supervisors, there is no direct control of park unit discretionary budgets by unit supervisors.

Non-seasonal budget responsibility for field staff. Park unit supervisors do not have, and did not previously have, budget responsibility for the wider category of discretionary spending beyond the enterprise funds. Instead, each park unit supervisor is given a spending card with a daily and monthly maximum specific to each unit. The monthly limit amounts to a spending cap, but the overall discretionary budget is less than twelve months' worth of the monthly limit. Park unit supervisors and district managers are not part of the process to develop the annual discretionary budget limits, except insomuch as spending in one year guides the budget in the next.

In general, park unit supervisors would like more input and control regarding discretionary spending. Some reported that absent knowledge of and accountability to the park unit discretionary budget, it is likely that spending in a unit is higher than would be absolutely

[55] There are some issues with parks budgeting for a calendar year season that crosses two state fiscal years. Parks division staff reported that unexpected changes in budget because of changes in the state budget at the fiscal year is more of a problem now that the Parks Division no longer has control of the non-lapsing funds from park-generated revenue.

necessary. Also, they are sometimes put in a position to purchase inefficiently. For example, because of the spending limits, they may buy an item every other week, rather than in bulk every other month or once for the season. Or they may spend more purchasing a collection of cheaper items day-to-day rather than requesting a single item that is above the daily limit.

Beyond the knowledge, involvement, and control of park unit supervisors over a park unit's seasonal employee costs, *there is no financial incentive for park unit directors to be aware of and minimize discretionary or fixed costs.* Giving park unit supervisors greater budgetary discretion and control could create an incentive to find savings in the fixed and discretionary budgets if some portion of future savings remains within the park system. This is not to suggest that park unit supervisors are not currently looking for ways to improve the parks they oversee. Instead, there may be added benefit to the units, and through them the public, if there is more flexibility afforded to the unit supervisors regarding budget control. Likewise, if district managers have greater budgetary awareness and responsibility, regional funding efficiencies may be discovered.

Recommendation

12. **The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection should involve field staff (i.e., district managers and unit supervisors) in the budget development and administration process for the Parks Division. Specifically, park unit budgets should be administered in coordination with the field staff throughout the fiscal year for non-personal service costs in a manner such that field personnel are aware of yearly budget limitations and allowed to retain some portion, as determined by the department, of any realized savings within the same park unit and/or district.**

Chapter VI

Operations and Funding Options

This chapter presents an overview of the potential impact of a number of possible courses of action regarding state park operations and funding and a recommendation.

Key Findings

- *Closing parks is a complicated proposition because of the state's statutory open space goal and the general desire by the Parks Division to preserve existing resources.*
- *Current resources may be adequate for maintaining current service provision levels in the short-term, but either an increase in funding and staffing or a decrease in services is necessary for continued adequate state park operations in the long-term.*
- *Increased revenues may be available if desired, but would likely need an initial investment to realize.*

The information presented throughout this report shows financial and staff resources are both down from previous levels and the major cuts to each have come primarily through attrition rather than targeted, purposeful cuts to programmatic offerings. The Parks Division is under pressure to maintain or expand publicly-visible services and park offerings (e.g., keeping less frequently used parks open, keeping busier parks relatively clean) despite the downward trend in resources for operations.

In response to declining staff numbers and available funding, the Parks Division has made a series of cuts to service and operations, but has done so under the guideline that decreases in service that are obvious to the public should be avoided. These cuts have taken many forms, including less frequent regular upkeep (e.g., lawns are mowed less often, bathrooms are checked and cleaned less often), less availability of park staff for educational or outreach purposes, and decreased presence of park staff who would otherwise be available for informational, customer service, or safety reasons. *Though the Parks Division has made efforts to limit the public exposure of these decreases in service, the current levels of service are at or below the point where cuts can be made without a decline in the public perception of the availability or quality of service provided.*

Even under the current budget constraints, the lack of data and its analysis regarding park performance has likely led to less than optimal allocation of increasingly scarce resources within the Parks Division. The sub-optimal allocation has been amplified by the decline in staffing and funding to the point where it is unlikely there is an overabundance of resources in any particular park given current service and programmatic offerings. Taken further, *even with improved planning and priorities, current resources are inadequate to maintain current service levels indefinitely.*

Possible Changes to Operations and Funding

There are numerous ways to address the disconnect between expected service provision and current resource levels. Discussed here are a few possible options, their relative merits, and the viability of their implementation.

Option One: Reduced Services: One approach is to scale back service levels to realign current resources with adequate service provision. There are several ways to approach a significant reduction in park offerings but all of them seem to be unpopular to the point of infeasibility. The biggest obstacle to closing parks en masse may revolve around the state's statutory open space goal to acquire a certain amount of land for outdoor recreation and conservation.[56] It is not clear what would be done with much of the existing park land if it is still owned by the state for open space purposes but not managed by the Parks Division.[57] Still, it is worth describing the various ways the number of parks and park services may be reduced to allow for adequate long-term resources of the remaining parks under the current service levels.

Instead of redistributing all current parks, services, and staff to 17 park units instead of 23 (as described in Chapter IV), this approach would be to close 6 units' worth of parks entirely across the state. Even when looking to close the smallest, least used parks, there are multiple issues that must be considered. There is a baseline of care or maintenance for all state lands, so not all personnel and money currently going to any possibly-closed parks could be transferred to the remaining locations. There also comes a time where severely limited maintenance once or twice a year will take more time and resources in the future than regular upkeep.[58]

Location of closures would also be an important consideration. While it may be tempting to simply close all the parks in an existing park management unit, especially in those with no supervisor and limited other staffing, closing an entire park unit will greatly decrease the access local residents may have to state parks, which specifically goes against the public access priority of the Parks Division as set out in the state recreation plan. If several parks are closed across a geographical region, the remaining park management unit is likely to be geographically large – meaning some of the time saved from closing parks will now be devoted to travel between more distant parks.

Another consideration is that the smallest parks are also generally not consuming significant portions of the budget. Closing the 35 smallest or least-used parks (25 percent of the park total) is unlikely to make up for a 25 percent decrease in staffing. Rather, it would take disproportionately more closures of the least-used parks to make current staffing and budget resources align with service offerings.

Option Two: Optimal Staffing. Another way to match services and financial and personnel resources would be to restore financial and staffing levels back to the early 2000 levels or even use the 2003 CHA study optimal levels of over 200 full-time employees and 1,900

[56] C.G.S. Sec. 23-8

[57] In some instances, other states have turned to municipal operation of state-owned parks to reduce state costs.

[58] DEEP personnel indicate the park closures of the early 1990s required investment well beyond the temporarily avoided maintenance costs in order to reopen years later (e.g., Gillette Castle required extensive renovations before it was reopened in 2002).

seasonal staff. As approaching these levels of staffing would involve a sizable ongoing increase in the Parks Division budget, it seems an unlikely option, even if it meant significant expansion of programs and services (and increased revenues would be expected, as well). Given Connecticut's recent budget issues, this option does not seem viable.

Option Three: Continuation. The default option is to leave the current pieces unchanged. The drop to current budget and staff levels has been accompanied by few obvious and visible cuts to park capacity or use. *It is possible the current service offerings can be maintained with new, relatively low levels of staffing and funding for a short while. However, it is unlikely that the current situation can be maintained indefinitely, even absent additional cuts*. At this point, it appears that virtually any reallocation of current resources to enhance service in one location can only be made at the expense of service(s) at other locations.

Future staffing is also a concern, as mentioned in Chapter IV, since a large portion of the work force is at or nearing retirement eligibility. Even if vacancies from future retirees are refilled in their entirety, outgoing long-time employees have institutional knowledge that may allow them to stretch limited resources further than newly hired employees. Some of this institutional loss may be mitigated by hiring new employees to train with the veteran staff, but this seems impractical to expect given the level of current resources.

Another issue with continuing the status quo revolves around deferred maintenance of the capital infrastructure. It is likely that some resources that are currently available for use will need repair in the near future. Likewise, some repairs and maintenance have undoubtedly been delayed due to the recent budget issues. Besides becoming completely unusable at some point, aging facilities in various states of disrepair may lead to declining opinions of parks among the public and eventually to decreased use.

Option Four: Performance Contingent Increases. A more balanced approach would restore staffing to a minimal but sustainable amount (i.e., the 12 additional staff proposed earlier in Chapter IV) while giving incentives for demonstrating high-level performance and measurable gains. A system with dynamic funding and flexibility for innovation could help ensure future staff and funding levels are adequate for existing (or otherwise appropriate) service levels.

As discussed earlier, linking the state parks' budget back to park-generated revenues in some way should give incentives to the Parks Division to grow revenue generating activities and services within the park system, deemphasize parks and locations with less or decreasing use, and potentially provide some additional revenues to the state in the long-term (albeit with additional funding, at least to start).

In order to enact something like a long-term break-even scenario, additional funding to the department would need to be appropriated based on performance. One avenue to aid performance measurement and give direct incentive to parks to generate more revenue would be installing a mechanism to return a portion of annual park-generated revenue to the park system through an appropriation system. Logistically, all park revenues would continue to go to the General Fund, but some portion of the revenues would be earmarked for appropriation to the Parks Division contingent upon demonstration of measured performance.

In this scenario there would be no need for mass park closures and there would be natural incentives for the Parks Division to reallocate resources to services and areas with the greatest public use. Further, additional funding would potentially be available as new programs and services are developed and park-generated revenues increased. While an initial funding commitment is necessary to make implementing this option reasonable, it appears some additional funding is necessary to avoid long-term service reduction and this balanced approach builds in performance-based incentives to more effectively operate state parks.

Recommendation

13. Between one-quarter and one-half of revenue generated in state parks shall be appropriated biennially to the Parks Division, with the specific proportion at the request of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and the approval of the Appropriations Committee. This appropriation shall be contingent upon the Parks Division's satisfactory participation in the Results Based Accountability process of the Appropriations Committee, or a similar performance-based measurement requested by the Appropriations Committee. The shared park-generated revenue shall not supplant the General Fund obligation to the Parks Division. The portion of park-generated revenues not appropriated to the Parks Division shall continue to support the General Fund.

The Parks Division shall create a plan for use of park-generated revenue that balances the distribution of park revenue-based funds among the park or park units that generated the revenue and the needs of the entire system of parks and present such plan, along with the initial RBA-style report card, to the relevant Appropriations sub-committees, and the Environment Committee. The initial fund distribution plan should emphasize implementation of performance metrics and related data-gathering and analysis.

Excepting the relatively minor revenues going to park-specific MRI accounts, Connecticut's current funding mechanism for state parks does not include the use of park-generated revenue, which is at odds with the national norm for state park funding and removes incentives for increased revenue generation. Appropriating some amount of park-generated revenue gives the Parks Division access to increased funding, but in return requires increased accountability regarding park performance. Legislative appropriation of park-generated revenue does not require the creation of an additional special fund outside the General Fund. This model is similar to other states, such as Missouri and Minnesota, in that park-generated revenues are available to state parks, but must go through the legislative appropriation process (though both of those states recapture 100 percent of park-generated revenues, rather than the 25 to 50 percent recommended here). Like those states and New York, Connecticut's state park funding would move towards being based on demonstrated performance.

Increasing Revenue Generation

Connecticut ranked 39th in overall park revenue generation in FY 12, five spots lower than its overall operating budget rank of 34th. As previously mentioned, while self-sufficiency is not necessarily an attainable goal, Connecticut was lower than average (ranked 36th in FY 12)

when comparing park-generated revenue to operating expenses. This could suggest that revenues are where they should be and the operating budget is too high. However, given the relatively low standing of both the operating budget and lower standing of the revenue collected, it appears any perceived imbalance between operating costs and park-generated revenues is more the fault of the latter being low.

Nationwide, state parks agencies are asked to generate revenue to help support overall park programming and as a way of passing the costs of park service provision on to those who use them most. There is always a balance involved between keeping prices at such a level they remain affordable for the public, but high enough to ensure the services continue to be provided. As discussed in Chapter III, states approach revenue generation in a wide variety of ways, with some states charging for entrance at all parks, others (like Connecticut) charging at a select number of parks, and still others not charging for entrance anywhere. All three models have endless variations and every state raises revenue through parks in some manner.

It may be that Connecticut's revenues are comparatively low because the state has already made a policy choice to make services and resources free to the public when possible and to avoid user fees generally. However, the revenues generated in Connecticut state parks are relatively low even in comparison to states that collect no parking or entrance fees. Given Connecticut's seemingly low levels of revenue production and the incentive to increase revenue through the recommendations in this report, the Parks Division will likely need to find ways to increase revenue generation.

If increased revenue generation is desired, there are several ways in which revenues may be enhanced. First, given the current staffing limitations, it is possible not all ticket booths are able to be staffed at all appropriate times (i.e., when use is sufficient to pay for at least the cost of ticket taking). This situation may occur because parks that currently charge fees are unable to charge at the correct times or because some of the most-used parks are not charging entrance fees at all. Second, other states, including New York, are exploring automating parking fees, especially in parks with regular use that do not otherwise warrant a regularly staffed ticket booth.[59] Connecticut does not use automated technology for parking fees, but could potentially increase revenues and/or decrease staffing costs through automation in this area. Third, revenues may increase through an increase in attendance, either through an increase in programmatic offerings or expanded marketing of parks.

If parks are expected to increase revenue generation, it is likely they will need additional resources to do so. Similarly, in order to give the Parks Division increased incentive to raise revenue levels, revenue generation levels should be tied directly to the Parks Division budget. It is possible that increasing the parks budget through recapture of some of the revenue will increase total revenue generation and may lead to either a win-win scenario (parks and the state receive greater revenues) or at least a break-even scenario where parks are more adequately and consistently funded at little or no greater cost to the state.

For example, the national median revenue generation rate compared to parks' operating budgets is 48 percent versus Connecticut's rate of 36 percent. If Connecticut's $17.8 million

[59] Automated parking can be accomplished through automated gates or through the use of parking meters.

parks operations budget (including benefits) were increased to $21 million, the revenue generation might be expected to increase from $6.5 million (36 percent of $17.8 million) to $10 million (48 percent of $21 million), meaning a $3.5 million increase in revenue for a $3.2 million increase in expenses. This is only one scenario under many that are possible, many of which would not involve recouping additional funding through increased revenue. Even under this scenario, an influx of additional funding would need to happen before any additional revenues might be realized.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

List of State Parks and Forests

Table A-1. List of State Parks and Forests

Name	Mng Unit	Town(s)	Acres	Facilities*
Beckley Furnace	Burr Pond	North Canaan	12	
Satan's Kingdom	Peoples	New Hartford	1	h,b,x
Above All	Lake Waramaug	Warren/Litchfield	31	h
Airline Trail	Mashamoquet/ Salmon River	Colchester, Columbia, East Hampton, Hebron, Lebanon, Pomfret, Putnam, Willimantic, Windham	40	bk,h,w,y
Algonquin	Burr Pond/Peoples	Colebrook	2987	
American Legion	Peoples	Barkhamsted	893	f,h,j,w,bk,b
Beaver Brook	Mashamoquet	Windham	401	h
Becket Hill	Rocky Neck	Lyme	260	h,p,f,o
Bigelow Hollow	Shenipsit	Union	516	b,f,h,p,w
Black Rock	Topsmead	Watertown	444	f,h,p,s,x
Bluff Point	Fort Trumbull	Groton	806	f,h,bk
Bolton Notch	Salmon River	Bolton	95	h
Brainard Homestead	Gillette	East Haddam	25	h
Burr Pond	Burr Pond	Torrington	438	b,f,h,l,p,s,w,x
Campbell Falls	Burr Pond	Norfolk	102	f,h,p
Chatfield Hollow	Cockaponset	Killingworth	412	f,h,l,p,s,w
Cockaponset	Cockaponset	Deep River, Durham, Haddam, Killingworth, Westbrook	17186	
Valley Railroad	Cockaponset	Chester, Deep River, Essex, Middletown, Old Saybrook	332	m,o,x
Dart Island	Cockaponset	Middletown	19	b,f
Day Pond	Salmon River	Colchester	180	f,h,l,p,s
Dennis Hill	Burr Pond	Norfolk	240	h,l,p
Devil's Hopyard	Gillette	East Haddam	1000	f,h,l,p
Dinosaur	Dinosaur	Rocky Hill	80	h,m,p
Enders	Peoples	Barkhamsted, Granby	2105	
Farm River	Sleeping Giant	East Haven	62	b,h,bk
Forster Pond	Cockaponset	Killingworth	218	h
Fort Griswold Battlefield	Fort Trumbull	Groton	17	m,o,p
Fort Trumbull	Fort Trumbull	New London	16	f,o,p
Gardner Lake	Gillette	Salem	10	b,f,s,p
Gay City	Salmon River	Bolton, Hebron	1569	f,h,p,s,w,bk
George D. Seymour	Salmon River	Haddam	222	f,h,j,w
Gillette Castle	Gillette	Hadlyme	185	h,l,m,o,p,x
James L. Goodwin	Mashamoquet	Hampton	2003	

Haddam Island	Cockaponset	Haddam	14	b,f
Haddam Meadows	Cockaponset	Haddam	175	b,f,p,w
Haley Farm	Fort Trumbull	Groton	267	h,bk
Hammonasset Beach	Hammonasset	Clinton, Madison	936	f,l,p,s,x
Harkness Memorial	Harkness Memorial	Waterford	304	f,o,p
Haystack Mt.	Burr Pond	Norfolk	292	h,p
Higganum Reservoir	Cockaponset	Haddam	147	f,h,j,b
Hopemead	Gillette	Bozrah/Montville	70	f,h
Hopeville Pond	Hopeville Pond	Griswold	554	b,f,h,p,s,bk
Housatonic Meadows	Macedonia	Sharon	452	f,h,p,b
Housatonic	Macedonia	Canaan, Cornwall, North Canaan, Sharon	10894	
Humaston Brook	Topsmead	Litchfield	141	h,f
Collis P. Huntington	Putnam Memorial	Bethel	883	f,h,w
Hurd Park	Salmon River	East Hampton	991	f,h,l,p
Indian Well	Osbornedale	Shelton	153	b,f,h,l,p,s,x
Ivy Mt.	Topsmead	Goshen	50	
Kent Falls	Macedonia	Kent	307	f,h,p
Kettletown	Putnam Memorial	Southbury	599	f,h,p,s
Killingly Pond	Mashamoquet	Killingly	162	b,f,h
Lake Waramaug	Lake Waramaug	Kent	95	f,p,s,x,b
Lamentation Mt.	Sleeping Giant	Berlin	47	h
Larkin State Park Trail	Putnam Memorial	Middlebury, Naugatuck, Oxford, Southbury	110	bk, h, w, y
Lovers Leap	Squantz Pond	New Milford	127	h
Macedonia Brook	Macedonia	Kent	2302	f,h,l,o,p
Mansfield Hollow (Federal Lease)	Mashamoquet	Mansfield	251	b,f,h,p,w,bk
Mashamoquet Brook	Mashamoquet	Pomfret	917	f,h,l,o,p,s
Massacoe	Penwood	Simsbury	503	
Mattatuck	Topsmead	Watertown	4673	
Meshomasic	Salmon River	Bolton, East Hampton, Glastonbury, Hebron, Portland	9026	
Mianus River	Sherwood Island	Stamford	527	h,b,f,y
Miller's Pond	Cockaponset	Durham	280	f,h,bk
John A. Minetto	Burr Pond	Torrington	715	f,h,p,w
Minnie Island	Gillette	Bozrah/Montville	1	b,h,p
Mohawk Mountain	Topsmead	Cornwall	273	h,l,p,w,f
Mohawk	Topsmead	Cornwall, Goshen	3743	h,l,p,w,f
Mohegan	Hopeville Pond	Scotland	956	
Mooween	Gillette	Lebanon	577	f,h,b
Mt. Bushnell	Lake Waramaug	Washington	214	h
Mt. Riga	Macedonia	Salisbury	276	h
Mt. Tom	Lake Waramaug	Litchfield	231	f,h,p,s,x,b

Nassahegon	Peoples	Burlington	1227	
Natchaug	Mashamoquet	Ashford, Chaplin, Eastford, Hampton, Pomfret, Windham	13438	
Nathan Hale	Salmon River	Andover, Coventry	1455	
Naugatuck	Sleeping Giant	Beacon Falls, Naugatuck	4153	
Nehantic	Rocky Neck	East Lyme, Lyme, Salem	5062	
Nepaug	Peoples	Canton, New Hartford	1373	
Nipmuck	Shenipsit	Ashford, Stafford, Union, Woodstock	9209	
Nye-Holman	Shenipsit	Tolland	787	
Old Furnace	Mashamoquet	Killingly	367	f,h,b,j
Osbornedale	Osbornedale	Derby	417	f,h,l,m,p,w
Pachaug	Pachaug	Voluntown, Plainfield, Griswold, North Stonington	28804	b,f,h,j,p,s,w
Paugnut	Burr Pond	Torrington, Winchester	1644	
Paugussett	Putnam Memorial	Newtown	1947	
Penwood	Penwood	Bloomfield	787	h,l,p,w
Peoples	Peoples	Barkhamsted	3059	
Seth Low Pierrepont	Putnam Memorial	Ridgefield	305	h,b,f
Platt Hill	Burr Pond	Winchester	159	h,p
Pomeroy	Mashamoquet	Lebanon	200	h,j
Pootatuck	Squantz Pond	New Fairfield	1103	
Putnam Memorial	Putnam Memorial	Redding	183	h,o,p,f,w
Quaddick State Forest	Mashamoquet	Thompson	1109	
Quaddick State Park	Mashamoquet	Putnam, Thompson	116	b,f,l,p,s,x,w
Quinebaug Lake	Mashamoquet	Killingly	181	b,f
Quinnipiac River	Sleeping Giant	North Haven	323	h,j,b,j
River Highlands	Dinosaur	Cromwell	177	h
Rocky Glen	Putnam Memorial	Newtown	46	h
Rocky Neck	Rocky Neck	East Lyme	708	f,h,l,p,s,x
Ross Pond	Mashamoquet	Killingly	314	b,f,h,j
Salmon River	Salmon River	Colchester, Hebron, Marlborough	6905	
Scantic River	Shenipsit	East Windsor, Enfield, Somers	784	f,h,j
Selden Neck	Gillette	Lyme	607	b,e,f,j
Shenipsit	Shenipsit	Ellington, Somers, Stafford	6962	
Sherwood Island	Sherwood Island	Westport	238	f,l,p,s,x
Silver Sands	Osbornedale	Milford	297	f,s
Sleeping Giant	Sleeping Giant	Hamden	1465	f,h,l,p
Southford Falls	Putnam Memorial	Oxford	126	f,h,p,w
Squantz Pond	Squantz Pond	New Fairfield	172	b,f,h,p,s,w
Stillwater Pond	Burr Pond	Torrington	226	f,b
Stoddard Hill	Pachaug	Ledyard	55	b,f,h
Stratton Brook	Penwood	Simsbury	145	f,h,l,p,s,w,bk

Sunnybrook	Burr Pond	Torrington	464	h,f,p,j
Sunset Rock	Peoples	Plainville	15	h
Talcott Mt.	Penwood	Avon, Bloomfield, Simsbury	574	h,l,o,p
Topsmead	Topsmead	Litchfield	615	
Tri - Mountain	Sleeping Giant	Durham, Wallingford	157	h
Tunxis	Peoples	Barkhamsted, Granby, Hartland	5519	
Wadsworth Falls	Cockaponset	Middlefield	285	f,h,p,s,w
George C. Waldo	Putnam Memorial	Southbury	150	h,f,y,j
West Rock Ridge	Sleeping Giant	Bethany, Hamden, New Haven	1691	f,h,l,o,p,w,b,bk,j,l
Wharton Brook	Sleeping Giant	Wallingford	96	f,h,l,p,s
Whittemore-Larkin Bridle Trail	Putnam Memorial	Middlebury, Naugatuck, Oxford, Southbury	242	h,y
Windsor Meadow	Penwood	Hartford, Windsor	132	h,bk,b,p,f
Wooster Mt.	Putnam Memorial	Danbury	444	Skeet, J
Wyantenock	Lake Waramaug/Macedonia	Cornwall, Warren	4083	
Bennett's Pond	Putnam Memorial	Ridgefield	460	bk,f,h,j
Camp Columbia Forest	Lake Waramaug	Morris	591	
Camp Columbia Park	Lake Waramaug	Morris	10	h,o
Centennial Watershed Forest	Putnam Memorial	Canaan, Easton, Fairfield, Monroe, Newtown, Redding, Ridgefield, Shelton, Stamford, Trumbull, Weston, Westport	15370	
Eagle Landing	Cockaponset	Haddam	17	f,p
Hop River Trail	Salmon River	Andover, Bolton, Columbia, Coventry, Manchester, Vernon	50	h,bk,w,y
Horse Guard	Penwood	Avon	105	h
Machimoodus	Gillette	East Haddam	300	f,h,p,y
Mono Pond Reserve	Salmon River	Columbia	218	f,h,b,w,p,j
Salt Rock	Hopeville Pond	Sprague	93	f,h,x
Sunrise Resort	Gillette	East Haddam	143	h
Trout Brook Valley	Putnam Memorial	Easton	300	h,j
Source of data: DEEP				

(*) Facility Abbreviations		bk. biking
b. boating/canoeing	l. shelter (picnic)	s. swimming
f. fishing	m. museum	w. winter sports
h. hiking	o. historic	x. concession
j. hunting	p. picnicking	y. horseback

Appendix B

State Park Fees Summary

Tables B-1 through B-4 show summaries of various fee types in state parks. The source for all tables in this Appendix is DEEP.

Table B-1. Parking Fees

	Number of parks	Residents	Non-Residents
Weekend	26	$9-13	$15-22
Weekday	11	$6-9	$10-15
Late-day (after 4 pm)	10	$5-6	$6-7
None	113	-	-

Note: Number of parks for each category is non-exclusive of other categories. The group of parks charging for weekend parking is inclusive of the sub-groups that charge for weekday or late-day admissions.

Table B-2. Camping Fees (per site per night)

	Number of parks	Residents	Non-Residents
Basic Campsite	13	$14-20	$24-30
Sites w/electricity, water, or sewer	2	$33-40	$45-52
Primitive Riverside Camping	4	$5 per person	
Rustic Cabins	5	$50-70	$60-80

•Parks may offer more than one type of camping/campsite.
•14 parks have non-primitive campgrounds.

Table B-3. Historic Site & Museum Admissions

	Age 13+	Ages 6-12	Ages 5 and under
Dinosaur State Park	$6	$2	Free
Fort Trumbull State Park	$6	$2	Free
Gillette Castle State Park	$6	$2	Free

Table B-4. Special Passes

	Eligibility	Use	Cost
Charter Oak Pass	CT Residents 65 and over	Lifetime Parking and Admission	Free
Disabled Veteran Pass	CT Resident Veterans with Service Related Disability	Lifetime Parking and Admission	Free
Heritage Passport	One year of unlimited access to Gillette, Dinosaur, Ft. Trumbull for a family		$67
Season Pass	Unlimited parking for one car for one calendar year		$67 (CT) $112 (non)

Source of data: DEEP

Appendix C

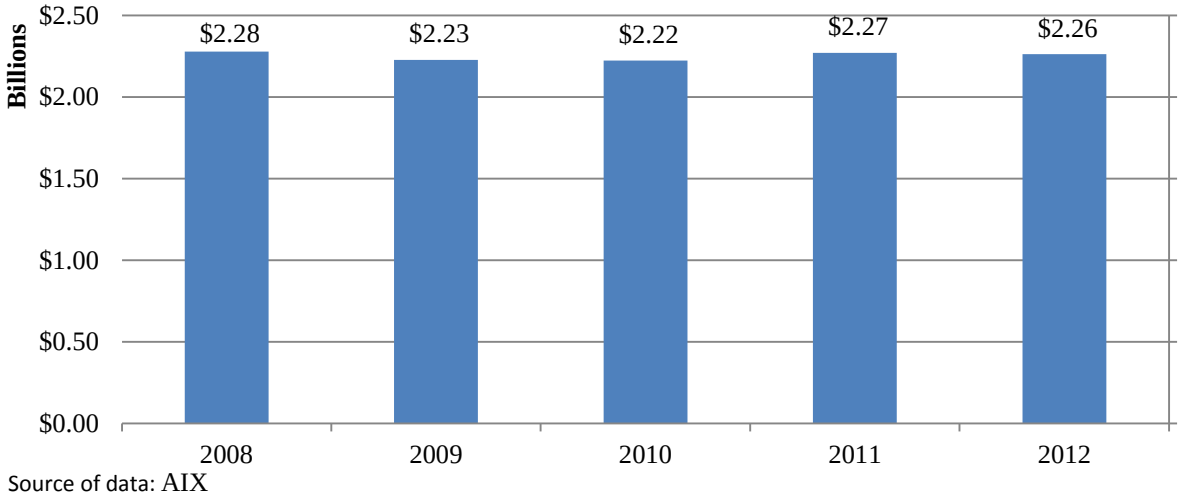
Other States Information

Information is provided in this appendix regarding nationwide state park funding sources and the methodology used to compare Connecticut to other states. The latter includes a description of the Annual Information Exchange (AIX) data, along with its limitations, and a discussion of case study states used throughout the report. (All 50-state comparison information comes via the FYs 08-12 Annual Information Exchange of the National Association of State Parks Directors, which relies on self-reported data from the states.)

Nationwide Trends in State Park Funding

States use a few major options to fund state park operations. Committee staff examined state parks data from all 50 states; operations funding is primarily driven by returning park-generated revenues to the park system and by using general fund monies. The use of dedicated funds from sources outside park user fees is also relatively common. Operating expenditures for the 50 state park systems was largely flat from FY 2008 through FY 2012. As seen in Figure C-1, the total operating expenses for the 50 state park systems remained within the $2.2 to $2.3 billion range for the five-year period.

Figure C-1. 50 State Parks Operating Expenses (FYs 08-12)

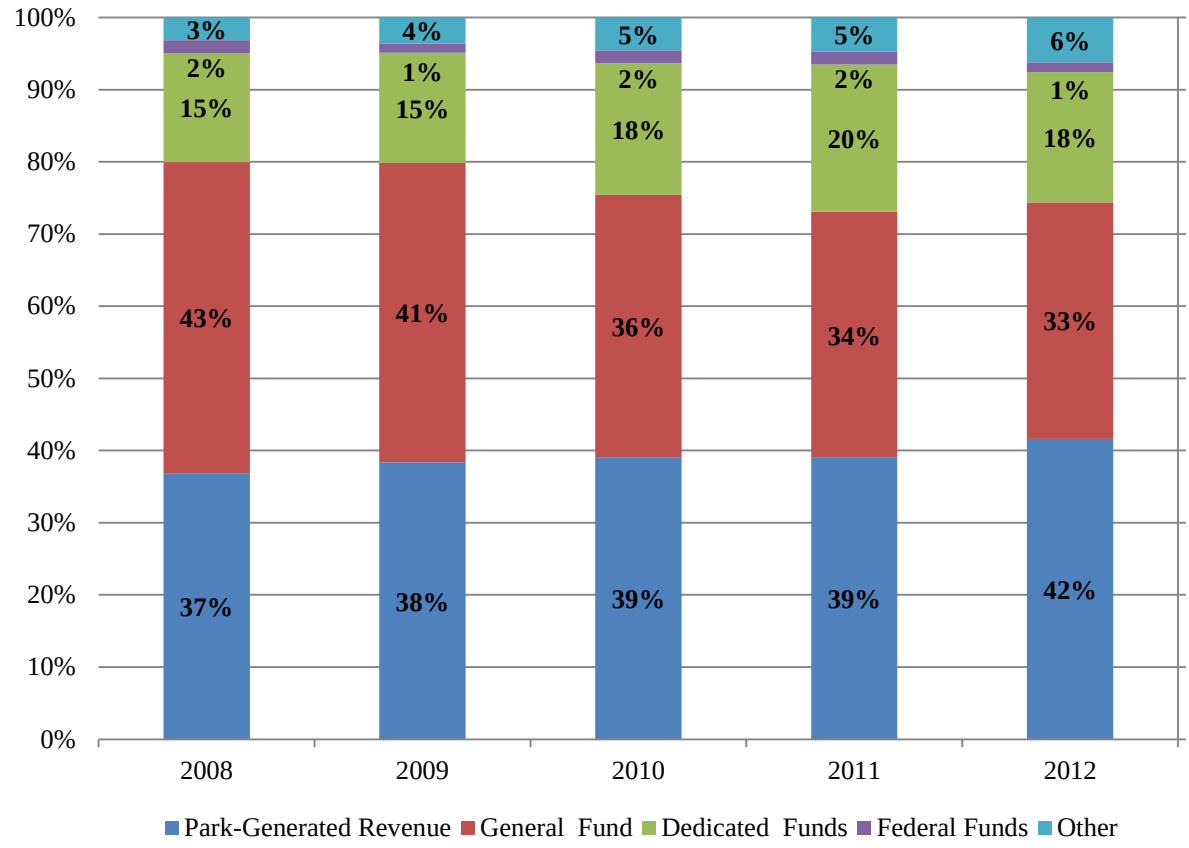


Source of data: AIX

Funding sources can be grouped together into five broad categories: park generated revenue, general fund monies, dedicated funds outside of park-generated revenue, federal funds, and all other sources. Park-generated revenue comes mainly from user fees (e.g., parking, admissions, camping). Dedicated funds are typically sourced from a percentage of taxes or fees not directly related to park operations (e.g., motor vehicle registrations or a state sales tax). Other sources of revenue can include non-profit/philanthropic endeavors or revenue derived from lease of land or other contractual agreements.

The two most common funding sources for park operations are park-generated revenues and general fund monies. For example, the two sources combined accounted for three-quarters of all funding for state park operations in FY 12, the most recent year available for analysis. Figure C-2 shows the percentage reliance on each type of funding source given the amount of operating expenditures per year. In the last five years, park-generated revenue has gone from the second highest source of state park operating funds by amount (37 percent) to the highest source (42 percent), while use of general fund monies for state parks has declined from 43 percent of all park operating funds to 33 percent. The third highest funding source was dedicated funds, which rose from 15 percent to 18 percent of all operating funding.

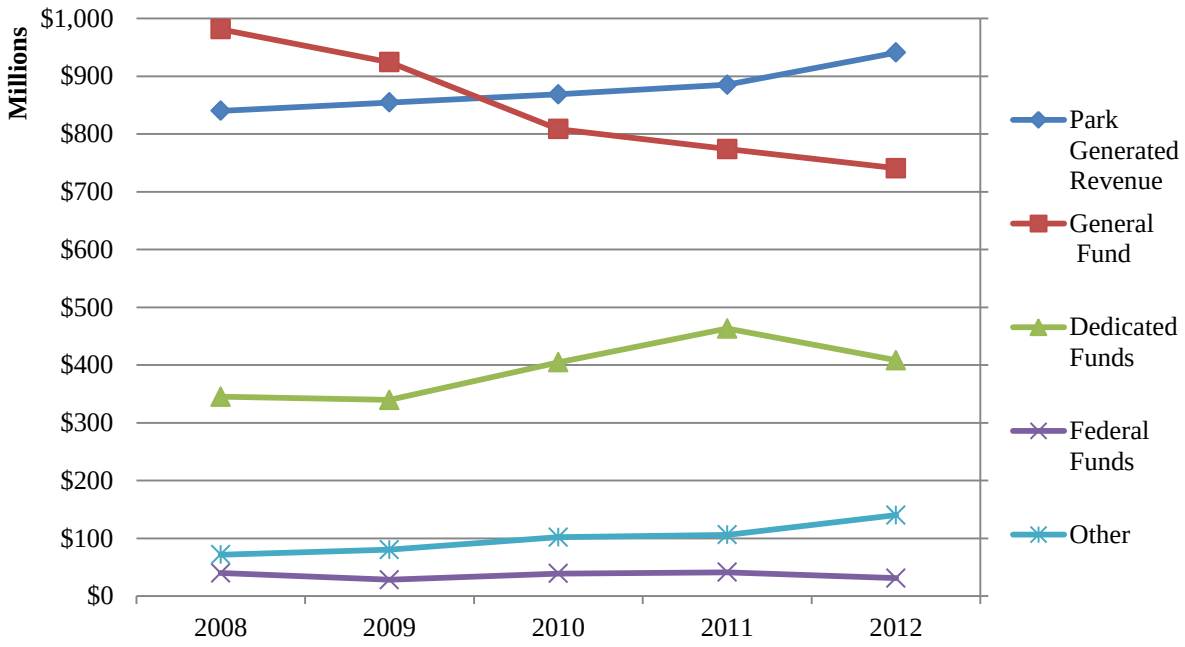
Figure C-2. Sources of Nationwide State Parks Funding (FYs 08-12)



Source of data: AIX

The growing reliance by states on park generated monies over general fund monies has occurred due to an overall increase in park generated revenue combined with a decrease in general fund spending on state park operations. Figure C-3 shows the overall amount of funding by type per year. The noticeable decrease in general fund monies has largely been replaced by park-generated revenue and a rise in monies from dedicated funds.

Figure C-3. Nationwide State Park Funding Source Amounts



Source of data: AIX

General fund financing. In FY 12, five states relied on general fund monies for over 75 percent of state park operating expenses. Among those five were three states, including Connecticut,[60] that relied exclusively on general fund monies for operating expenses, according to the AIX data.[61] There were 10 states that used no general fund monies for operating expenses in FY 2012. In total, 37 states (74 percent) received half or less of their operating expense funding from a general fund. Table C-1 shows states' reliance on general fund contributions in FY 2012 and FY 2008. (Table C-4 includes funding source information for all 50 states.)

Table C-1. States' Reliance on General Fund

% reliance on general fund for operating budget	FY 12	FY 08
0%	10	7
1-25%	9	7
26-50%	18	16
51-75%	8	13
76-100%	5	7

Source of data: AIX

As noted above, the amount of funding for state parks that comes from states' general funds has gone down in aggregate in the last several years. This is mirrored by a decrease in the number of states receiving more than half of operating funding from general funds, from 20 states in FY 2008 to 13 in FY 2012. Similarly, the number of states receiving no contribution

[60] Though the breakdown of operations funding sources in Chapter II of this report (using data provided by DEEP) indicates funding outside the General Fund, this was not indicated in the information Connecticut sent to the AIX report.

[61] Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Wyoming report operations funding exclusively from general funds. Massachusetts and Maine received 85 percent and 82 percent of funding from general funds, respectively.

from the general fund rose from seven to 10. The majority of states maintained or slightly decreased reliance on general fund monies for operating expenses.[62] Eight states saw decreases in reliance over 25 percentage points.

Connecticut's General Fund use. From FY 11 to the present, Connecticut has relied exclusively on general fund monies for state park operating expenses, according to AIX data. Even under the previous funding mechanism which included the use of special funds (FY 10 and prior), Connecticut's reliance on general fund monies was among the 10 highest ranging from 65 to 70 percent. *Connecticut relies more heavily on general fund monies for state park operating expenses than most states. Further, Connecticut was the only state that dramatically increased systematic reliance on general fund monies between FY 08 and the present.* This was due to the elimination of the Environmental Conservation Fund and the movement of parks-related expenditures and revenues from the Environmental Conservation Fund to the General Fund , as discussed in Chapter II.

Park-generated revenue. State parks can generate revenues through user fees, but there are trade-offs involved in deciding fee structures (i.e., when, where, and how much), as well as determining how much, if any, of park-generated revenue should be used to fund park operations. The overall shift towards greater reliance on park-generated revenues as a funding source has been accompanied by most states having little or no change in the percentage reliance and a few states (17) seeing increases of over 10 percentage points. This movement is largely the inverse of the movement away from general funding reliance, but the changes in park-generated revenues have generally been within the quartiles of use, shown in Table C-2.

Table C-2. States' Reliance on Park-Generated Revenue

% reliance on park-generated revenues for operating budget	FY 12	FY 08
0%	4	3
1-25%	8	10
26-50%	19	20
51-75%	14	14
76-100%	5	3

Source of data: AIX

There is some variation in the percentage of park-generated revenue that is used for park operating expenses. In 32 instances, state parks kept more than 90 percent of park-generated revenue, with another 12 states keeping between 50 and 90 percent of park-generated revenues. Four states' park systems kept no revenue, with only 2 states keeping some amount, but less than half, of park-generated revenue. Connecticut is among the four states not using park-generated revenue for state parks operations.

Self-sustainability. Few state park systems generate enough revenue through user-fees to fund all operating expenditures without other funding mechanisms augmenting the money. For FYs 08-12, only New Hampshire relied solely on park-generated revenue without an alternative funding source through general funds or dedicated funds. However, other states generated enough revenue to pay for operating costs fully, but continue to use a variety of funding sources.

[62] 27 states had general fund reliance changes less than 10 percentage points and another 13 states saw percentage point decreases between 11 and 25 percent. No states increased general fund reliance over 10 percentage points and less than 30 percentage points (Connecticut's increase). Texas had an increase of 33 percentage points due to a one-year change in their dedicated revenue policy in FY 2008, but this change was not systemic or ongoing.

Table C-3. Operating Costs Compared to Overall Park-Generated Revenues (FY 12)	
% of operating costs capable of being funding by current revenue levels	**Number of states**
0-25%	7
26-50%	21
51-75%	13
76-95%	5
96-100%+	4
Source of data: AIX	

In total, four state park systems, including New Hampshire, generate revenue sufficient to completely cover operating expenditures in FY 12, with another five parks at revenue levels of 80 to 90 percent of operations. Twenty-two states generate revenue sufficient to fund over half of operating expenses (28 states were at less than half). Table C-3 shows the number of states with park-generated revenue to operations expenditures at various levels.

Program review staff examined whether the nine states with the highest revenues compared to operating costs were systematically different from other states. There is no perceived regional distinction, as there are potentially self-sufficient states all over the country. These nine states are all in the top half in amount of revenue generated,[63] but causation between self-sufficiency and revenue generation amount may go in either direction (i.e., it may be that states are asked to be self-sufficient because other factors have already led to high-revenue generation levels or that states are asked to be self-sufficient which leads to higher revenue-generation). The self-sufficient states vary to either side of average in terms of state park acreage, with no states from this group in the top 10 and only one state in the bottom ten. Three of these states have top fifteen attendance overall (ranks 10, 14, and 15 in FY 12), and two states are among the top five for overnight (i.e., camping) attendance. All of the potentially self-sufficient states were able to use 50 percent or more of park-generated revenues towards park operation expenditures, with five of the nine states retaining more than 80 percent of park-generated revenues in FY 12.

There is no clear explanation for what factors make self-sufficiency from user fees alone possible for state parks and, likewise, it is not evident what impacts, positive or negative, self-sufficiency may have on state park service provision.

Connecticut's park-generated revenue use. Prior to FY 10, part of Connecticut's park-generated revenue was captured within the non-lapsing Environmental Conservation Fund and used for roughly 30 percent of overall park operating expenses. In FY 08, Connecticut ranked 31 (slightly below average) in reliance on park generated revenue. Since the Environmental Conversation Fund was absorbed into the state's General Fund as part of broader statewide deficit mitigation efforts, state park-generated revenue has been used within the general fund. In FY 12, Connecticut was one of four states to not use park-generated revenue to fund state park system operating expenses, based on national data.

Given that Connecticut's park-generated revenue covers less than a third of the Parks Division's operating costs[64] and the relative scarcity of other states that generate revenue sufficient to pay for all operating costs, it is unlikely Connecticut's state park system is capable of self-sufficient funding without drastic changes to service provision, amount of acres

[63] Looking only at total gross revenue without adjustments for state wealth or cost of living.
[64] Including fringe costs for personnel.

maintained, and/or wholesale changes in fee structure. Park-generated revenues will be discussed further later in this chapter.

Dedicated funding sources. Dedicated funding sources outside of park-generated revenue is the third highest type of funding source by amount nationwide. These most commonly include dedicating a portion of a state's sales tax or excise tax (e.g., fuel tax) towards park operations or charging an additional fee for revenue generation. The funding source may be broad (e.g., a portion of a statewide sales tax) or narrow (e.g., a portion of sales tax on sporting goods in the state). Altogether, 36 states receive funding for state park operations through dedicated funding sources.

Unlike the larger funding sources, no state relies solely on dedicated (non-park generated) revenues. Five states get the majority of funding from a dedicated source, but none relies on a dedicated fund for more than 80 percent of operation expenses. Besides the 14 states that do not receive funding from a dedicated source, 21 states receive less than 20 percent of operations spending from a dedicated source.

Of the 20 states that receive 10 percent or more of their funding from a dedicated source, 17 states also keep most or all park-generated revenue. Only one state with a dedicated revenue source does not keep any park-generated revenue. Connecticut does not have a dedicated revenue stream for parks.

Like park-generated revenues, reliance on and use of a dedicated revenue source typically leads to general fund contributions being supplanted. This makes sense on a statewide level, as absent parks getting a portion of a revenue stream, the money raised in a particular revenue stream is likely to be going towards the general fund. Table C-4 shows percentage of operations expenditures were paid in each state using the major funding source types for FY 12 and FY 08.

Table C-4. Park Operations Funding Source Percentage by State

	Park Generated Revenue		General Fund		Dedicated Source		Other	
States	2012	2008	2012	2008	2012	2008	2012	2008
Total	42%	37%	33%	43%	18%	15%	8%	5%
Alabama	83%	63%	0%	0%	10%	7%	7%	30%
Alaska	24%	29%	59%	63%	1%	2%	16%	7%
Arizona	55%	35%	0%	31%	40%	31%	5%	3%
Arkansas	47%	33%	27%	30%	26%	37%	0%	0%
California	27%	25%	31%	41%	34%	26%	8%	8%
Colorado	46%	54%	0%	17%	18%	0%	35%	29%
Connecticut	0%	30%	100%	70%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Delaware	56%	56%	35%	40%	2%	2%	6%	2%
Florida	66%	55%	0%	0%	33%	44%	1%	1%
Georgia	65%	56%	27%	38%	2%	4%	7%	2%
Hawaii	42%	26%	44%	61%	7%	0%	7%	13%

Idaho	40%	25%	8%	43%	41%	23%	11%	8%
Illinois	22%	41%	24%	38%	54%	21%	0%	0%
Indiana	83%	76%	16%	22%	0%	0%	1%	2%
Iowa	28%	25%	41%	53%	22%	17%	9%	5%
Kansas	52%	45%	29%	44%	9%	1%	10%	11%
Kentucky	62%	69%	38%	31%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Louisiana	4%	1%	68%	94%	28%	0%	0%	5%
Maine	0%	0%	82%	80%	17%	18%	1%	2%
Maryland	34%	49%	1%	48%	62%	0%	3%	2%
Massachusetts	12%	9%	85%	89%	0%	0%	2%	2%
Michigan	74%	75%	0%	0%	26%	25%	0%	0%
Minnesota	19%	29%	22%	59%	58%	11%	1%	0%
Mississippi	64%	52%	36%	48%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Missouri	25%	18%	0%	5%	70%	76%	5%	2%
Montana	50%	36%	0%	0%	41%	57%	10%	7%
Nebraska	67%	66%	31%	31%	1%	3%	1%	0%
Nevada	42%	23%	30%	59%	14%	10%	14%	7%
New Hampshire	100%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
New Jersey	32%	11%	68%	89%	0%	0%	0%	0%
New Mexico	31%	17%	51%	48%	2%	1%	15%	34%
New York	41%	28%	56%	66%	1%	4%	2%	1%
North Carolina	19%	14%	66%	74%	0%	2%	14%	10%
North Dakota	39%	40%	56%	59%	0%	0%	5%	1%
Ohio	46%	41%	47%	54%	7%	5%	0%	0%
Oklahoma	54%	53%	38%	42%	8%	1%	0%	4%
Oregon	37%	36%	0%	0%	31%	56%	33%	8%
Pennsylvania	24%	20%	41%	75%	4%	5%	32%	0%
Rhode Island	0%	0%	100%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
South Carolina	84%	63%	0%	0%	0%	0%	16%	37%
South Dakota	66%	62%	14%	22%	8%	4%	13%	12%
Tennessee	42%	44%	55%	54%	0%	1%	4%	0%
Texas	25%	33%	34%	2%	39%	64%	1%	2%
Utah	66%	30%	25%	38%	2%	19%	7%	12%
Vermont	48%	87%	2%	12%	0%	0%	50%	0%
Virginia	52%	35%	48%	65%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Washington	40%	23%	15%	70%	6%	5%	39%	2%
West Virginia	58%	56%	30%	26%	12%	18%	0%	0%
Wisconsin	85%	70%	11%	24%	1%	0%	4%	7%
Wyoming	0%	0%	100%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Source of data: AIX								

OTHER STATES: METHODOLOGY

Annual Information Exchange

Program review staff relied primarily on the National Association of State Park Directors Annual Information Exchange (AIX) data for national information and interstate comparisons. While extremely helpful in putting Connecticut's parks into context, there are a number of flaws in the data, as described below.

The AIX report is based on self-reported data from each of the 50 states. Extensive information is sought in seven areas: inventory, facilities, attendance, land, revenue, personnel, groups. The data is gathered annually for a time period covering July 1 of one year through June 30 of the next. There may be reporting issues due to the timeframe as states use alternative fiscal years – for instance, though the timeframe coincides with Connecticut's fiscal year, much of the information collected by the Parks Division is based on the calendar year. Other states may face similar issues in reporting precisely for the time period listed. This should not be a large concern for overall trends, but may lead to unexpected problems in any given year.

While AIX seeks data about many specific resources, there is not an industry standard for parks operations or administrative organization, so states may vary in naming conventions of particular features. For instance, though parks and forests are referred to mostly in combination and interchangeably in Connecticut and in this report, operations for these two types of public land are sometimes controlled by distinct divisions, bureaus, or even by different agencies entirely in other states. As such, comparing the parks (i.e., parks and forests combined) of Connecticut to the parks (excluding forests) of other states is complicated. Another example of disparities in reporting comes regarding counts of seasonal employees. As mentioned in Chapter II, staff learned that some states report a full count of individuals as the number of seasonal employees, while other states report the full-time equivalent of seasonal work, regardless of the number of individuals hired.

Committee staff was in position to compare state park data from DEEP with the information reported to AIX regarding Connecticut. One major discrepancy is the inclusion of fringe costs in the total operational costs reported to AIX whereas most operation costs descriptions from DEEP exclude fringe costs. Both depictions are accurate, but, short of surveying all fifty states, it is not possible to determine whether fringe costs are included or excluded from operating costs elsewhere.

There are also instances were DEEP is overgeneralizing or misreporting data for the AIX reports. As an example, AIX reports for years before DEEP's Environmental Conservation Fund was eliminated indicate that 100 percent of park-generated revenue was used as a funding source for operations, when, as discussed in Chapter II, actual expense information shows that a bit less than half of park-generated revenue was going back to the Parks Division, with some portion going to the General Fund and the rest going to a variety of related expenses within the Environmental Conservation Fund. This issue is not limited to Connecticut, as there are some instances where another state mislabels funding or revenue within the catchall "other" categories, rather than in a more appropriate named category. As with most collections of raw data,

representations of broad characteristics for the entire data set, in this case the nationwide data, are likely to be less error-prone than specific, direct comparisons between states.

Case Studies

As a supplement to the AIX information, committee staff interviewed state parks personnel in Missouri, Minnesota, New York, and Pennsylvania, as well as conducting email correspondence with personnel in Massachusetts. These parks were selected for further study because of their similarity to Connecticut's parks in some respect (including size and number of parks), their proximity to Connecticut, or being mentioned in national literature as successful and notable organizations (though no state matched all three criteria areas). Table C-5 provides a summary of some key points about the state park system in each case study state. Total park acreage was considered in narrowing the list of comparable states before the discrepancies surrounding reporting of forest acres was established. At least one state per funding group except New Hampshire, was contacted as the study found Connecticut is unlikely to be able to operate parks purely from park-generated revenues.

Table C-5. Summary of Key Indicators of Selected Other States

Possible Comparable States	Park Acres Total	Park Revenue	General Fund	Dedicated Fund	Other	Total Operating Funds	Operations $ /acre
New Hampshire	233,071	100%	0%	0%	0%	$15,224,193	$65
Michigan	292,721	74%	0%	26%	0%	$55,403,403	$189
Missouri	204,331	25%	0%	70%	5%	$28,871,747	$141
Minnesota	284,131	19%	22%	58%	1%	$76,400,000	$269
Pennsylvania	297,055	24%	41%	4%	32%	$84,839,000	$286
New Mexico	196,677	31%	51%	2%	15%	$18,027,806	$92
Tennessee	190,144	42%	55%	0%	4%	$80,893,200	$425
New York	1,351,569	41%	56%	1%	2%	$214,266,000	$159
North Carolina	215,404	19%	66%	0%	14%	$33,764,282	$157
New Jersey	441,110	32%	68%	0%	0%	$28,609,930	$65
Massachusetts	353,889	12%	85%	0%	2%	$61,069,895	$173
Connecticut	206,633	0%	100%	0%	0%	$17,756,210	$86

Source of data: AIX FY 12.
Notes: Colors in the first six columns group states with similar distributions of funding sources.
Colors in the last two columns show funding amounts relative to all fifty states, with the highest funding in bright green, the lowest funding in bright red, and average funding in yellow.

Additional states were considered for further study because of particular features or funding mechanisms, including several that warranted more extensive web research, such as Texas and Washington.

Table C-6 shows some staff and park size comparisons between Connecticut and selected case study states. As discussed in Chapter IV, some states reported number of seasonal staff by individuals and others by full time equivalent, so comparisons are difficult to interpret absence definitive knowledge of the way in which states reported.

Table C-6. Selected Comparisons to Case Study States								
	Acres Per Total Staff (full-time and seasonal)		Seasonal and Part Time Staff Per Full Time Staff		Visitors Per Total Staff (full-time and seasonal)		Acres Per Park	
STATE	#	Ranking	#	Ranking	#	Ranking	#	Ranking
Connecticut	332	12	5.29	6	12,009	26	1497	29
Massachusetts	225	22	2.00	25	19,314	13	1044	34
Minnesota	274	17	2.55	17	7,895	38	159	49
Missouri	310	14	0.21	46	29,299	9	2404	17
New York	216	23	2.53	18	9,326	34	952	36
Pennsylvania	213	24	1.41	32	27,661	10	2475	16
Source of data: AIX								

While particular features of case study states are mentioned throughout the report, Table C-7 summarizes some key factors of the funding mechanisms in case study states.

Table C-7. Funding Mechanism Comparisons with Case Study States				
STATE	Charges Entrance Fee	Keeps Park-Generated Revenue	Non-Park Dedicated Revenue	Notes
Connecticut	Y	N	N	Eliminated EC Fund in 2009
Massachusetts	Y	Y	N	Highest General Fund Reliance of states that use some portion of park-generated revenue for park operations
Minnesota	Y	Y	Sales Tax	Legacy Sales Tax source added in 2008
Missouri	N	Y	Sales Tax	Sales tax is Constitutional and up for re-approval every 10 years
New York	Y	Y	N	Recent implementation of performance measurement
Pennsylvania	N	Y	Energy Lease	Used to retain 25% of revenue for capital expenses in non-lapsing fund, but fund was swept. Now all park revenue is appropriated for operations.
Source of data: AIX and PRI Staff Interviews with State Park Personnel				

Appendix D

Park Management Unit Expenses

Table D-1. Parks Division Expenditures by Unit* (FY 13)						
Mgt Unit	TOTAL	Payroll	% of Unit Expenses	Other	% of Unit Expenses	% of Parks Division Expenses
Burr Pond	$231,939	$204,606	88%	$27,333	12%	2%
Cockaponsett	$443,706	$346,669	78%	$97,037	22%	3%
Dinosaur	$344,268	$277,131	80%	$67,137	20%	3%
Director	$825,645	$608,969	74%	$216,676	26%	6%
East Distr HQ	$104,925	$97,727	93%	$7,198	7%	1%
Ft. Trumbull	$422,802	$278,956	66%	$143,846	34%	3%
Gillette Castle	$530,276	$397,185	75%	$133,091	25%	4%
Hammonasset	$1,364,605	$941,753	69%	$422,852	31%	11%
Harkness	$1,327,457	$528,916	40%	$798,541	60%	10%
Kellogg,Osborne& Goodwin	$461,782	$343,780	74%	$118,002	26%	4%
Lake Waramaug	$212,264	$160,667	76%	$51,597	24%	2%
Macedonia	$286,886	$169,096	59%	$117,790	41%	2%
Mashamoquet	$395,250	$308,015	78%	$87,235	22%	3%
Osborndale	$432,903	$359,151	83%	$73,752	17%	3%
Pauchaug	$652,780	$487,748	75%	$165,032	25%	5%
Penwood	$385,060	$315,203	82%	$69,857	18%	3%
Peoples	$234,026	$182,052	78%	$51,974	22%	2%
Public Outreach	$291,213	$278,416	96%	$12,797	4%	2%
Putnam	$507,280	$413,184	81%	$94,096	19%	4%
Rocky Neck	$775,647	$606,684	78%	$168,963	22%	6%
Salmon River	$337,705	$264,617	78%	$73,088	22%	3%
Shenipsit	$137,346	$96,611	70%	$40,735	30%	1%
Sherwood Island	$622,808	$453,020	73%	$169,788	27%	5%
Sleeping Giant	$413,353	$336,856	81%	$76,497	19%	3%
Squantz Pond	$287,786	$221,471	77%	$66,315	23%	2%
Topsmead	$521,106	$401,073	77%	$120,033	23%	4%
West Distr HQ	$258,831	$152,557	59%	$106,274	41%	2%
Grand Total	$12,809,649	$9,232,113	72%	$3,577,536	28%	100%

Source of data: DEEP
*Includes sub-divisions other than 23 park management units.

Table D-2. Select information on Park Units			
Park Unit	**Number of Attendance Areas**	**Number of Paid Day-use Areas**	**Number of Parks with Camping Areas**
Burr Pond	1	1	0
Cockaponset	4	3	0
Dinosaur	1	1	0
Fort Trumbull	4	2	0
Gillette Castle	2	1	2
Hammonasset	1	1	1
Harkness	1	1	0
Hopeville	2	1	2
Lake Waramaug	2	2	1
Macedonia	3	1	2
Mashamoquet	4	2	1
Osbornedale	3	1	0
Pachaug	1	1	2
Penwood	3	1	0
Peoples	2	1	1
Putnam Memorial	4	1	1
Rocky Neck	2	1	1
Salmon River	5	1	0
Shenipsit	3	1	0
Sherwood Island	1	1	0
Sleeping Giant	3	2	0
Squantz Pond	1	1	0
Topsmead	2	1	1
Total	55	29	14
Source of data: DEEP			

Appendix E

CHA's Infrastructure Conditions Assessment Prioritization Criteria

The Clough, Harbour and Associate's Infrastructure Conditions Assessment prioritization criteria was one part of a project prioritization tool provided to the Parks Division at the conclusion of the study. The following shows the criteria summary:

Project Priorities Column	Project Performance Goals	Priority Value for Each Category
A	Would alleviate or eliminate a potential or real threat to the health, safety and welfare of the public/staff.	100
B	Would result in more efficient maintenance and / or operation of the park or park facility.	80
C	Project will protect natural resources(s).	90
D	Project will protect a historic/archaeological resource	70
E	Project enhances park patron's interaction with the environment.	60
F	Project addresses issues of importance not described by other criteria	50
G	Preserve or enhance a park activity	40
H		
I		

Urgency Identifiers:	Description of Urgency	Value of Multiplier
I ("Urgent!")	The problems this Project resolves are very serious. This Project needs immediate attention as soon as possible.	1.5
II ("In one year")	The problems this Project resolves are somewhat serious. This Project needs attention within one year.	1.2
III ("In three years")	The problems this Project resolves are slightly more serious than others of the same description in other similar structures in the park system.	1.1

Appendix F

Agency Response

Connecticut Department of
ENERGY &
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION

79 Elm Street • Hartford, CT 06106-5127 www.ct.gov/deep Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer

February 27, 2014

Ms. Carrie E. Vibert, Director
Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee
State Capitol, Room 506
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Ms. Vibert:

Thank you for forwarding the draft final report of the Program Review and Investigations Committee's study on the funding of Connecticut State Parks and Forests. We appreciate the effort and interest that the Committee members, as well as you and your staff, brought to bear on this study. We particularly want to commend the work of Brian Beisel and Eric Gray in their conduct of the review. They invested a significant amount of time participating in meetings with various segments of the Parks Division staff, as well as external stakeholders to gain an in-depth understanding of our operations and personnel. We also appreciate the report's acknowledgment of the work of our parks field staff in providing exceptional service to the public and stewardship of our treasured parks in the face of diminished staffing and resources.

Comments the Department might have made about the draft report can be more specifically outlined in discussion of Raised Bills 5369 and 5370 on which the agency will submit testimony. We look forward to working with the Committee, the Legislature as a whole, and the Administration as these bills are considered during the legislative session.

In additional to issues that are addressed in the raised bills, the draft report contains several other recommendations that the Department will closely evaluate over the coming months. As you know, the implementation of some of these proposals would be contingent upon the availability of resources, while others could be implemented unilaterally by the agency.

Thank you again for the thoughtful work of the Program Review and Investigations staff. I can be reached at 860-424-3571, or you may wish to contact Deputy Commissioner Susan Whalen at 860-424-3133 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Robert J. Klee
Commissioner
Department of Energy
and Environmental Protection